

*'Live
unnoticed'*

Λάθε βιώσας

ON THE VICISSITUDES
OF AN EPICUREAN DOCTRINE

GEERT ROSKAM

Live unnoticed
(Λάθε βιώσας)

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Epicurean Doctrine

By
Geert Roskam



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To my parents

Ipsa enim altitudo attonat summa

(Maecenas, ap. Senec., *epist.* 19,9)

... le defir que i' ay de vivre en repos & de continuer
la vie que i' ay commencée en prenant pour ma
deuife: *benè vixit, benè qui latuit* ...

(Descartes, *Letter to Mersenne*, April 1634; ed. Adam-
Tannery I, 285–286)

Epikur hat zu allen Zeiten gelebt und lebt noch, unbekannt denen, welche sich Epikureer nannten und nennen, und ohne Ruf bei den Philosophen. Auch hat er selber den eigenen Namen vergessen: es war das schwerste Gepäck, welches er je abgeworfen hat.

(Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, 2,227)

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According to later traditions, Epicurus claimed to have learned nothing from his philosophical predecessors. He even gave his own teacher Nausiphanes the hardly enviable nickname of 'jelly-fish'. I have absolutely no reason to follow his example.

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ABBREVIATIONS

References to Latin authors follow the forms established by the *TLL*. Abbreviations of Greek authors and works are usually as listed in *LSJ*. Where they differ (esp. in the case of Philodemus and of Plutarch's *Moralia*), they are more complete. Abbreviations of journals are as listed in *L'Année Philologique*.

- ANRW *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, Berlin–New York, 1972–.
- CPG E.L. a Leutsch – F.G. Schneidewin (eds.), *Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum*, Göttingen, 1839–1851.
- DK H. Diels – W. Kranz (eds.), *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Dublin–Zurich, 1966–1967.
- KG R. Kühner – B. Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache*, Zweiter Teil: *Satzlehre*, Hannover–Leipzig, 1898–1904.
- LCL *Loeb Classical Library*
- LSJ H.G. Liddell – R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th edn., rev. H. Stuart Jones, with a revised supplement, Oxford, 1996.
- OCT *Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis*
- OLD P.G.W. Glare (ed.), *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 2nd edn., Oxford, 2000.
- PHerc. Herculaneum Papyri; cf. M. Gigante, *Catalogo dei Papiri Ercolanesi*, Napoli, 1979.
- RE G. Wissowa (and others) (ed.), *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, München–Stuttgart, 1893–1980.
- RS *Ratae Sententiae* (= Κύρια δόξαι)
- SV *Sententiae Vaticanae*
- SVF J. von Arnim (ed.), *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* [indices by M. Adler], Leipzig, 1903–1924.
- TAM E. Kalinka (and others) (ed.), *Tituli Asiae Minoris*, Vindobonae, 1901–1989.
- TLL *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (Index: Leipzig, 1990).
- TrGF B. Snell – R. Kannicht – S. Radt (eds.), *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, Göttingen, 1977–2004.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

σοφὸν δὲ μηδένα φάναι πλὴν αὐτοῦ
γεγονέναι καὶ τῶν μαθητῶν

(Plutarch, *Non posse* 1100A)

1.1. This is a book on two words, which were offensive, scandalous, outrageous, and provocative. No doubt they were equally attractive, seductive, enticing, and fascinating. They were merely two common words, which were not even technical or abstruse ones, but they stood for a whole way of life, ridiculed and despised by many, praised and applauded by others. These two words were λάθε βιώσας: ‘live unnoticed’.

Their author was Epicurus, their purpose happiness. They advocated a life far away from all of the troubles of politics and free from the disorders caused by ambitious but empty desires. Such a life yields far more pleasures than a life devoted to brilliant but arduous projects. Even though Epicurus emphatically denied that something could arise out of nothing (*Epist. ad Her.* 38–39), he seems to have made one exception, that is, his own thinking. His hostility towards all παιδεία is well-known, as are his sharp criticisms of his philosophical predecessors¹ and his notorious claim of being an autodidact.² If this claim was indeed justified, one could simply bracket out all previous traditions and immediately turn to Epicurus. But *was* it justified? And how should it be understood? It is important to note that our information mainly comes from polemical sources and should thus not be taken at face value. Epicurus no doubt found much to criticise in the views of his philosophical predecessors and was convinced that he was offering something new, but his claims were in all probability more nuanced than his polemical opponents would have it.

¹ See esp. D. Sedley (1976a).

² See e.g. Diog. Laert. 10,8 and 13; Cicero, *nat. deor.* 1,72–73 and 93; Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 1,3–4; Plutarch, *Non posse* 1100A; on the motivations behind Epicurus’ claim, see, e.g., K. Freeman (1938), 158–160, and A. Laks (1976), 68–69.

It is not the purpose of this introduction, however, to enter at length into a discussion of the precise relation between Epicurus' doctrine and that of his predecessors. Its aim is in fact much more modest. I will just focus on the advice of 'living unnoticed' itself and examine whether there can be found antecedents of it in the literary, historical, or philosophical traditions before Epicurus.

More concretely, two main points will emerge from the following survey. The overall impression will be that the ideal of 'living unnoticed' remains for the most part absent from these traditions. Many of Epicurus' predecessors eagerly participated in public life and most preferred a great reputation to an 'unnoticed life', although it is important to add that this general picture may be distorted to some extent by the filter of our sources. On the other hand, it will be shown that there may be found several traces of ideals that anticipate Epicurus' advice of *λάθε βιώσας*. Some of them are rooted in a non-philosophical context (Euripides), others in a philosophical one (the Democritean tradition). Nearly always, however, the fragmentary state of these texts seriously hampers interpretation. As far as we can conclude from the scanty source material, the idea of an 'unnoticed life' occasionally occurred, but never formed an intrinsic part of a systematised philosophy. Furthermore, it was never motivated by the same elaborate argumentation that can be found in Epicurus' philosophy.

1.2. At first sight, the antecedents of the Epicurean ideal of an 'unnoticed life' can be traced back to the earliest Greek literature. In an interesting study, F. Wehrli has examined the ideal of *λάθε βιώσας* in archaic and classical Greek poetry.³ He argued that this ideal is repeatedly presented as the remedy against excessive human craving for political power and immortal fame, a craving that arouses the envy of the gods and thus directly leads to the destruction of man. The ideal of an 'unnoticed life' is thus closely connected, in Wehrli's view, with the traditional Greek ideas of *ὑβρις* and *νέμεσις*. The question remains, however, whether he was right in making this connection.

The answer is that he was almost certainly wrong. One need not live unnoticed in order to avoid the anger of the gods. Theseus was not guilty of *ὑβρις* by making his well-known journey from Peloponnesus to Athens, nor was Heracles by accomplishing his celebrated twelve

³ (1931).

labours. Examples can easily be multiplied and one may add that the view of the gods which this traditional perspective implies had long been questioned by Epicurus' philosophical predecessors and was radically rejected by Epicurus himself. It is safe to conclude that in the whole literary tradition that was conditioned by this age-old world view, no direct antecedent of the Epicurean ideal of an 'unnoticed life' is to be found.⁴

1.3. The ideal is likewise absent from the earliest periods of philosophical thinking, at least as far as we know from the scanty extant fragments and—equally relevant in this context—from some biographical data. The importance of this restriction will appear in due course. As a point of departure, I would like to take two passages from Plutarch's works. The first concerns the Seven Sages and is to be found in his *Life of Solon* (3,8). Plutarch notes that Thales' wisdom was apparently the only one which at that time exceeded the realm of merely practical usefulness; the other sages all owe their reputation of wisdom to their political virtue. One should note that the tradition about the Sages was in Plutarch's time not in complete agreement. Though Plutarch adopts a view shared by many others,⁵ he no doubt knew perfectly well that Plato held the opposite position, characterising the sages as rather unworldly thinkers who did not engage in politics.⁶ There apparently existed two opposite traditions on this point, the precise evaluation and interpretation of which has important implications for our study of antecedents of the Epicurean ideal of *λάτρε βιώσας*. But before dealing with this question in somewhat more detail, it is useful to introduce some further material into the discussion. This brings us to the second Plutarchan passage.

In the concluding section of his anti-Epicurean polemic *Adversus Colotem*, Plutarch emphasises the contrast between Epicurus' useless *dolce far niente* and the great political accomplishments of a whole series of non-Epicurean philosophers, including several Presocratics (viz. Parmenides, Empedocles, Melissus, and Zeno of Elea). However, as in the case of the Seven Sages, the 'political interpretation' of the Presocrat-

⁴ The best precursor I know is Theognis, 1067–1068, where one does not find the ideal itself, but some of the preferences upon which it is based.

⁵ See, e.g., Diog. Laert. 1,40 (= Dicaearchus, fr. 30 Wehrli); Cicero, *rep.* 1,12; Themistius, *Or.* 31, 352c; Aelian, *VH* 3,17.

⁶ *Hp. Ma.* 281c and *Th.* 174a; cf. also Aristotle, *EN* 6, 1141b3–8, and Diog. Laert. 1,25 on Thales.

ics does not remain unchallenged. Several philosophers who have been presented by Plutarch as excellent statesmen are elsewhere depicted as apolitical thinkers who are only interested in purely theoretical matters and avoid political life.⁷

The two opposite traditions regarding the Seven Sages thus apparently return in the case of the Presocratics too. Which is the (more) correct one? Neither. In an influential article, W. Jaeger⁸ has argued that the opposition should be understood in the light of a much later discussion. It is only when Plato had sung the praise of a pure contemplative life (most emphatically in the *Theaetetus*) that the Presocratics were interpreted from such a perspective (for instance by Heraclides of Pontus). A counter-reaction was to follow, inspired by those philosophers (e.g. Dicaearchus) who preferred a more active life to mere theory and again projected their ideal into the distant past. The opposition between both traditions, then, should ultimately be traced back to the Platonic and Peripatetic discussion regarding the ideals of *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*.

Although Jaeger's view sometimes presupposes an all too neat categorisation, to my mind his general conclusion remains valid.⁹ This has two important implications. First, the tension between the two opposite perspectives exists only for those later thinkers who interpret the material about the Presocratics in the light of the categories *vita activa*—*vita contemplativa*, but not for the Presocratics themselves. Theoretical contemplation and active involvement in their society are both aspects of their attitude and do not mutually exclude each other. Most Presocratics were aristocrats who entered the public domain in their own way¹⁰ and one may add that those thinkers who rejected the traditional striving for political power and fame did not do so in order to 'live unnoticed' but rather in order to acquire another, more brilliant fame.¹¹ In

⁷ See, e.g., Diog. Laert. 9,21 (= 28 A 1 DK) on Parmenides, and 8,62 (= 31 A 1 DK) on Empedocles.

⁸ (1967), 426–461.

⁹ See R. Joly (1956) for a more critical view; cf. also S. Gastaldi (2003), 47–48.

¹⁰ This is even true for a man like Anaxagoras. Even though he resided at Athens as a metic and was thus debarred from taking part in politics, he was still in touch with Pericles and attracted enough attention to be brought to trial; cf. also L.B. Carter (1986), 141–146.

¹¹ Somewhat similarly, Xenophanes took pride in his wisdom, which in his view should be preferred to the fame and honours which athletes receive; Athenaeus, 10, 413f–414c = 21 B 2 DK. Heraclitus does not seem to have engaged in politics (cf. Diog. Laert. 9,2–3 and 6 = 22 A 1 DK), but he was convinced that the best men strive for

this respect, the advice to ‘live unnoticed’ appears to remain completely alien to the world of the Presocratics.

There is, however, also a second implication of Jaeger’s view, which further qualifies this conclusion. One should note indeed that the filter through which the information on the Presocratics has reached us hampers our study on the antecedents of the Epicurean maxim of *λάθε βιώσας*. For, according to later categories, such an ‘unnoticed life’ is neither a means for a *vita activa* (of course not) nor *vita contemplativa*, but for a third kind of life, that is, the *βίος ἀπολαυστικός*. As a direct result, if there existed any material that would have been most interesting for our study, it would have been irrelevant for the later discussion about the Presocratics (which focused on the opposition between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*), and would have been simply filtered away. None of the early Presocratics we know of has been regarded as advocating the ideal of a life consistently devoted to pleasure. It should not be excluded *a priori* that some of them indeed adopted such a position and preferred pleasure to fame,¹² but if they existed, we know nothing about them, not even their names.

1.4. It is hardly necessary to deal with the sophists, since the ideal they pursue is diametrically opposed to that of an ‘unnoticed life’. Nor should we dwell on Socrates’ position. It is true of course that he never willingly engaged in politics—although he never flinched from his duties as an Athenian citizen—and explicitly showed his preference for a life as a private citizen,¹³ but such an attitude of aloofness from political affairs did not imply that he was leading a sequestered and unnoticed life. He questioned everybody—not only rich aristocrats but also ordinary people such as Simon the shoemaker¹⁴—and bothered his interlocutors to such an extent that in the end he was taken to court and condemned. Socrates did not live or die unnoticed. No doubt his conduct and views radically differed from those of the sophists, but they were both no less opposed to the ideal of *λάθε βιώσας*.

eternal fame (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 4,7,50,2 and 5,9,59,5 = 22 B 29 DK); see J. Lallot (1971) for a somewhat different interpretation, which, anyhow, links the best men with *κλέος ἀέναον*.

¹² Cf. the passage of Theognis mentioned above; *supra* n. 4.

¹³ This at least appears from Plato, *Ap.* 31d–32a.

¹⁴ J. Sellars (2003).

1.5. At this point, we should leave for a moment the domain of philosophy, and even literature, in order to turn to the political scene. During the late 5th century B.C., a new phenomenon appears, that of the figure of the ἀπράγμων who deliberately abstains from participating in politics. This evolution, of particular interest for our study, has been discussed in detail by L.B. Carter.¹⁵ He shows that in the years around 430 B.C. a group of young prominent aristocrats such as Critias and Antiphon preferred not to engage in political life. It should however be noted that the decision of these ἀπράγμονες was not always motivated by a disinterest in politics or a lack of leadership qualities. They were perfectly able to assume political duties but were obstructed by the functioning of democracy, as appears most clearly from the example of Antiphon. Antiphon, according to Thucydides (8,68,1), had great political and oratorical talents, but refrained from appearing before the assembly because he was suspected by the people on account of his reputation for cleverness. The system of εὔθυναί and the continuous risk of falling victim to sycophants were no doubt additional disincentives to prospective generals and politicians.

As far as the Epicurean maxim λάθε βιώσας is concerned, two conclusions can be drawn from Carter's careful study. First of all, the ἀπράγμονες at the end of the fifth century B.C. should not be regarded as direct precursors of Epicurus' political philosophy. Their decision not to engage in politics was not based on a positive ideal, supported by coherent philosophical argumentation, but was grudgingly made and was furthermore primarily inspired by fear. Nonetheless—and this is the second conclusion—their very existence throws an interesting light on the relevance and possible attractiveness of Epicurus' position. Both the early ἀπράγμονες and Epicurus had a great concern for their personal safety, and both arrived at the conclusion that this safety can best be obtained by means of a sequestered life (see *infra*, 2.2.2a for the position of Epicurus). Epicurus and his followers repeatedly pointed to the great dangers that a political career entails. The fact that rich aristocrats, starting from a completely different perspective, came to the same conclusion not only provides additional support for this particular argument of Epicurus, but may also help in illustrating its precise scope and meaning.

¹⁵ (1986). Cf. also W. Nestle (1926), V. Ehrenberg (1947), K. Dienelt (1953), and S. Gastaldi (2003), 48–56.

1.6. The attractiveness that a sequestered and simple life, far from the dangers of public life, had at that time, is also illustrated by many passages in Euripides' œuvre. More than once, the *dramatis personae* refer to such a life in positive terms¹⁶ and even regard it as an ideal.¹⁷ The idea is thematised in (at least) three plays, although it never becomes a *Leitmotiv* which has a decisive influence on the course of action. This is not the place to offer a detailed analysis of these plays. I limit myself to a brief discussion of the three relevant passages and some general conclusions about Euripides' use of the motif and its relevance as antecedent of the maxim λάθε βιώσας.

1.6.1. Let us first turn to the second episode of the *Ion*. Xuthus has just recognised Ion as his son and proposes to follow him to Athens, where scepter and wealth await him (578–579). Ion, however, prefers to stay where he is and formulates four arguments to motivate this choice. First he refers to the political situation in Athens, where both powerless citizens and office holders will be hostile to him (595–597 and 602–606). He will appear as a ridiculous fool to capable people who avoid rushing into politics. In a city which is 'full of fear', ἡσυχάζειν appears to be the ideal (598–601). The second argument, on the difficult relation with Xuthus' childless wife, need not detain us here (607–620). Ion's third argument, however, is again important to our context. He nuances the advantages of tyranny, which implies all kinds of fear and arduous efforts (621–632) and explicitly prefers a happy and simple life as an ordinary citizen (625–626). As a complement to these three arguments, directed against his future life in Athens, he finally adduces a fourth, much more positive argument, derived from his present life at Delphi. There he enjoys much leisure and endures little trouble; furthermore, he can be sure to be righteous in the eyes of the gods (633–644). This peaceful existence at Delphi apparently reduces the quiet life at Athens to a kind of δεύτερος πλοῦς.

¹⁶ Such as Orestes, who recognized that the poor farmer, who is merely a man of the people and has no great fame at Argos, nonetheless excels in nobility (*El.* 380–382).

¹⁷ A case in point is Hippolytus, who affirms in his reply to the accusation of his father Theseus that he prefers the safe existence of a common citizen who enjoys the company of good friends to kingly power (*Hipp.* 1013–1020).

1.6.2. In his *Antiope*, Euripides introduces a debate between the two brothers Amphion and Zethos.¹⁸ In this discussion, which would soon become famous, Zethos presents himself as the paradigm of a public-spirited politician, who accuses his brother for being all too busy with an idle muse, fond of wine, and neglecting money (*TrGF* 5.1, fr. 183). In his reply, Amphion presumably prefers aesthetic values (fr. 198) to wealth (*ibid.*) and physical strength (fr. 199–201). This position, not atypical for a musician, leads him away from politics:

ὅστις δὲ πράσσει πολλά μὴ πράσσειν παρὸν,
μῶρος, παρὸν ζῆν ἡδέως ἀπράγμονα. (fr. 193)

“Everyone who does many things while it is possible not to do them is a fool, since it is possible to live pleasantly as a quiet man.”

In Amphion’s view, the man who meddles in many affairs is a fool, since he neglects the much better alternative that is open to him, that is, a pleasant life far away from politics. The significant juxtaposition of the terms ἡδέως and ἀπράγμονα brings us close to Epicurus’ position. Yet differences remain. Amphion more than once gives evidence of a concern for pleasure (fr. 197; cf. also 187 and 219) and rejects the more vulgar kind of pleasure (fr. 201), but his hedonism, if it may be called so, is rooted in a pessimistic image of man, characterised by the instability of happiness (fr. 196) and closer to Anacreon than to Epicurus. Moreover, although he prefers the quiet life (fr. 194) of an ἀπράγμων to the troubles of politics and perhaps even explicitly expresses his desire to remain an ordinary citizen (cf. fr. 227: εὐθὺδήμιον), he nonetheless argues that such an apolitical man is more useful to the city and to his friends than an audacious ruler (fr. 194; cf. also fr. 200). Somewhat paradoxically, it is apparently the ἥσυχος who best qualifies for being a politician.¹⁹

1.6.3. In the prologue of the *Philoctetes*, finally, Odysseus wonders whether his reputation for wisdom is justified after all:

πῶς δ’ ἂν φρονοίην, ᾧ παρῆν ἀπραγμόνως
ἐν τοῖσι πολλοῖς ἡριθιμημένῳ στρατοῦ
ἶσον μετασχεῖν τῷ σοφωτάτῳ τύχῃ;
(*TrGF* 5.2, fr. 787)

¹⁸ See J. Kambitsis (1972), ix–ixx and F. Jouan – H. Van Looy (1998), 223–237 for a detailed reconstruction of the play.

¹⁹ Cf. S.R. Slings (1991), 142–143.

How could I be wise? It was possible for me
to live quietly, as a cipher in the crowd of the army,
and share an equal fortune with the wisest.

We are close to the beginning of the play,²⁰ so that we can be certain that Odysseus' words will receive some attention. Once again, ἀπραγμόνως ζῆν is presented as an attractive ideal. Odysseus notices that by being just one among the many, he would be able to receive the same advantages as the wisest, while—one may presume—avoiding many disadvantages.²¹

Yet, Odysseus, who has been regarded as the paradigm of the successful Athenian politician,²² does not intend to adopt this line of reasoning. He goes on to argue that man is an ambitious being (fr. 788) and applies this general observation to himself. He too is driven by ambition (cf. Dio of Prusa, 59,2: ὑφ' ἧς φιλοτιμίας καὶ γὰρ προάγομαι) and always makes further efforts to ensure that the fame of his previous accomplishments will not pale (fr. 789). It is clear then that Odysseus carefully ponders the motivations of his conduct and succeeds in combining concern for the public interest with personal ambition. Nonetheless, the ultimate roots of his motivations appear to be quite irrational (that is, his great ambition) and his self-presentation in fact has much in common with Epicurus' own evaluation of the politician's irrational conduct. All in all, the alternative of a simple life as an ordinary soldier seems the more rational one.

It is interesting to note that Odysseus' antagonist Philoctetes, who is living in isolation from the rest of the Greek army, seems even less motivated by rational arguments. His isolation, at first a dire necessity, is later continued through bitterness and rancour against the Greeks in general and Odysseus in particular (cf. Dio of Prusa 59,3 and 7 = fr. 789b and d). It is only after Odysseus has stolen his bow that he will join the Greek army, going "for the most part unwillingly, though also yielding to the persuasion of necessity" (Dio of Prusa, 52,2).²³

It seems clear that nothing is left of the rational ideal of ἀπραγμόνως ζῆν evoked at the very outset of the play. Both Odysseus and Philoctetes are captured in the net of personal ambitions and necessity—a situation

²⁰ Cf. Dio of Prusa 52,11–12 and 59,1; for a reconstruction of the whole play, see C.W. Müller (2000), 162–215.

²¹ Cf. Dio of Prusa 52,12, where ἀπραγμόνως is completed by ἀλύπως.

²² See, e.g., R. Goossens (1962), 101–103, and S. Douglas Olson (1991), 280–281.

²³ On the reading ἀκων preserved by the manuscripts, see C.W. Müller (1997), 29, n. 71.

so typical of tragedy. Both in their own way have to sacrifice themselves to the good of the Greek army, and neither seems to do so wholeheartedly. S. Douglas Olson is probably right in arguing that Euripides' *Philoctetes* "shows politics as a nasty but necessary business, in which men are driven by base (or socially useful) motives and individuals are sacrificed to the good of the group, and in which no behavior is ever absolutely free".²⁴

1.6.4. What general conclusions can be drawn from the above analysis? First of all, it is striking that the motif of ἀπράγμωνος ζῆν usually turns up at the beginning of the play. This is perhaps not a mere coincidence. Euripides of course had to bear in mind the myth, where such an ideal had no place. The motif is hardly necessary for the plot of the story and soon disappears. At the beginning of the play, however, before events begin to occur in quick and linear succession, it offers several interesting ways of renewing our understanding of the myth.

First of all, it contributes in a plausible and meaningful way to the characterisation of the *dramatis personae*. Secondly, the motif can be used to question several aspects of the mythic worldview. It suddenly raises a problem by undermining the heroic perspective and thus keeps the audience in suspense. In two cases the problem is solved immediately (as in the *Ion* and the *Philoctetes*), in the other one it is developed somewhat more in detail (as in the *Antiope*).

One may conclude then that Euripides' use of the motif primarily serves dramatic purposes. The references to the ideal of ἀπράγμωνος ζῆν find their *raison d'être* primarily in the internal requirements of the plays themselves. The question remains regarding whether they also reflect the view of the ἀπράγμονες at the end of the fifth century B.C.; Carter thinks that they do.²⁵ I am not the best placed to comment on the difficult question of the precise relation between Euripidean theatre and contemporary politics, but I am inclined to agree with Carter, though only after having underlined once again the primacy of purely dramatic considerations. It seems likely after all that passages such as those discussed above appealed at least to some among the audience. Furthermore, the above passages show that the idea of living a sequestered apolitical life was in the air in Euripides' day. It should cause no surprise that important differences with Epicurus'

²⁴ (1991), 282.

²⁵ Cf. his discussion of the *Ion* and the *Antiope* in (1986), 155–173.

ideal of *λάθε βιώσας* remain. Since Euripides and Epicurus were sowing different seeds into different soils, the plants had to be different as well.

1.7. When we return to the domain of philosophy, we can—somewhat paradoxically perhaps—again be brief. Plato never advocated the pleasures of an ‘unnoticed life’. His great interest in politics appears both from his life and his writings, and finds its most powerful expression in his famous ideal of the philosopher-king. It is of course true that Plato was not insensitive to the attraction of a purely contemplative life (*Tht.* 173c–176a), but he was also convinced that exactly this contemplation is the best preparation for governing the state. Accordingly, the philosopher should be forced to descend into the cave again in order to take up his political duties (*R.* 7, 519c–520e and 540ab; cf. 1, 347b–d).²⁶ It goes without saying that the Epicurean ideal expressed by the maxim *λάθε βιώσας* has no place at all in such a perspective.

Particularly illustrative in this respect are Plato’s references to and his interpretation of some of the Euripidean passages discussed above. Several allusions to the debate between Zethos and Amphion in the *Antiope* can be found in the last part of the *Gorgias*.²⁷ Callicles explicitly points to Zethos’ position (485e; cf. 489e) when advising Socrates to abandon philosophy and take part in politics (484c–486d). One should note in passing that by introducing such advice into his own perspective of the right of the stronger, Callicles in fact strongly radicalises Zethos’ arguments. Socrates, on the other hand, prefers to side with Amphion (506b), even though some important differences between them remain. As we have seen, Amphion defends an ideal of *ἡσυχία* and *ἀπραγμοσύνη* and tries to reconcile this with the demands of his society. Socrates likewise considers his philosophical life to be apolitical (473c: *οὐκ εἰμὶ τῶν πολιτικῶν*), but he also claims that he, while being apolitical, is still the only true politician in Athens (521d), since he is the only one who really makes his fellow citizens better (cf. also Xenophon, *Mem.* 1,6,15). It is clear that Socrates radicalises the position he adopts no less than Callicles. Especially important, however, is the focus of Socrates’ radicalisation, in which *ἀπραγμοσύνη* has to yield to a much more public-

²⁶ He can only abstain from politics in a completely degenerate state (*R.* 6, 496cd; cf. *Ep.* 7, 331cd), but this is obviously not the ideal situation.

²⁷ A.W. Nightingale (1992) even argues that Plato adapted the model of Euripides’ tragedy when he wrote his *Gorgias*.

spirited conduct. In this sense, Euripides comes closer to Epicurus' ideal than Plato's Socrates does.²⁸

More interesting in our context is a passage in the myth of Er, near the very end of the *Republic*, where Socrates tells how all the souls after death and subsequent reward or punishment have to choose a new life. The last soul that has to make its choice happens to be that of Odysseus. Recalling its former toils, it abandons all ambition and looks for the apolitical life of an ordinary citizen. When it finally finds such a life in a corner, where it lies disregarded, it gladly makes its choice, with the comment that it would have done the same if it had come first (10, 620cd). It is clear that Odysseus' soul here regards an 'unnoticed life' as the best alternative, and moreover, its choice is undeniably presented in fairly positive terms. This soul wisely takes into account the experiences of its former life, takes its time to make a well-considered choice and does not have to make a complaint afterwards. There can be little doubt that it should be regarded as a positive example that is worthy of imitation in the way in which it makes its choice.

The question remains, however, whether the choice itself is worth imitating too. First of all, one should not underestimate the degree of *Spielerei* in this section of the myth. The passage may well derive its significance mainly from being a reminiscence of the prologue of Euripides' *Philoctetes*.²⁹ If this is true, it is aimed more at entertainment than at philosophical advice. Secondly, the choice of Odysseus' soul (just like that of the others) directly results from its previous life. It is no doubt fitting for Odysseus, but not necessarily for a philosopher. The choice for the life of a public-spirited philosopher who tries to reconcile in his own life and thinking the contemplation of nature with political activity is in any case an alternative worth considering, to say the least.

1.8. Plato's politically oriented philosophy left its mark on many of his pupils and successors. It is well-known that both Speusippus and

²⁸ The direct implication of my view is that Plato's *Gorgias* provides only a little information about Amphion's precise position. See S.R. Slings (1991) for a different view. One may wonder, however, whether Epicurus' advice to 'live unnoticed' may be regarded as a kind of development which started with this Socratic-Platonic new concept of politics, which is not concerned with institutions, but with souls. As M. Erler pointed out to me, Epicurus' originality may be understood as a radicalisation of Socrates' therapy of the souls of the others by turning it into caring for one's own soul.

²⁹ Cf. C.W. Müller (2000), 164 and 292.

Xenocrates actively engaged in politics,³⁰ but they were certainly not the only Academic philosophers to do so. In the first years of its existence, the Academy indeed produced many philosopher-politicians and it has actually been regarded as Plato's first step in the direction of the realisation of his ideal state.³¹ The Academy had to give future philosopher-kings an adequate παιδεία. In such a perspective, it is hardly surprising that many pupils left the school in order to enter political life.³² Some were sent to different cities as legislators, often at the explicit request of the cities themselves, which might suggest that the political know-how of the Academy was famous throughout the Greek world.³³ Others rose to fame as tyrannicides³⁴ and still others built on a brilliant political or military career.³⁵

This picture could create the impression that the philosophical education of the Academy was entirely directed towards a political career. More than once, the Academy itself has even been called a school of politics.³⁶ This, however, is a one-sided and greatly over-simplifying characterisation. For one should note that the influence of the Academy on the political career of its pupils is not always clear—it may have

³⁰ On Speusippus' political achievements, see P. Merlan (1959), 202–211; A. Wörle (1981), 28–33; K. Trampedach (1994), 138–140, on those of Xenocrates, see A. Wörle (1981), 33–44; K. Trampedach (1994), 141–143; J. Dillon (2003), 90–94.

³¹ Cf., e.g., M. Isnardi (1956), 405, and A.-H. Chroust (1967), 26.

³² Hermippus wrote a work entitled Περί τῶν ἀπὸ φιλοσοφίας εἰς ἀριστείας καὶ δυναστείας μεθεστηκότων (Philodemus, *Hist. Acad.* col. xi, 4–7).

³³ Plutarch offers a whole list in *Adv. Colot.* 1126CD: Aristonymus was sent by Plato to the Arcadians, Phormio went to Elis (cf. also *Praec. ger. reip.* 805D), Menedemus was sent out to Pyrrha on Lesbos, and Eudoxus gave laws to the Cnidians (cf. also Diog. Laert. 8,86–88); see further A. Wörle (1981), 44–46, 103–105, 112–114 and 152–155; K. Trampedach (1994), 21–49 and 57–61; short discussions also in P.-M. Schuhl (1946/7), 49–50, and A.-H. Chroust (1967), 36.

³⁴ Most famous among them is, of course, Dion. Other tyrannicides who had connections with the Academy were Python and Heraclides of Aenus (who killed Cotys; see, e.g., Demosthenes, 23,119 and 163; Aristotle, *Pol.* 5, 1311b20–21; Philodemus, *Hist. Acad.* col. vi, 15–20; Plutarch, *Adv. Colot.* 1126C; Philostratus, *VA* 7,2; cf. K. Trampedach (1994), 90–92), and, some generations later, Ecdemus and Megalophanes of Megalopolis (who killed Aristodemus and helped in expelling Nicocles; Polybius, 10,22,2–3 and Plutarch, *Phil.* 1,3–4 and *Arat.* 4,1–9,3).

³⁵ Leo of Byzantium and Phocion studied together at the Academy (Plutarch, *Phoc.* 14,7), as did Delius of Ephesus (Plutarch, *Adv. Colot.* 1126D; Philostratus, *VS* 1,485–486) and, perhaps, Chabrias (Plutarch, *Adv. Colot.* 1126C; but Plutarch is *testis unus*). Orators such as Aeschines, Lycurgus, and Hyperides were sometimes ranged among Plato's pupils too (Ps.-Plutarch, *Dec. or. vit.* 840B; 841B and 848D; Diog. Laert. 3,46); discussion can be found in K. Trampedach (1994), 93–101 and 125–138.

³⁶ P.-M. Schuhl (1959), 101, and A.-H. Chroust (1967), 25–26.

remained rather limited for many among them³⁷—and moreover not all Academic philosophers laid the same emphasis on the importance of actively engaging in political life. The older Xenocrates already withdrew more and more from the political scene,³⁸ and his successor Polemon seems to have completely abandoned the Academic political tradition,³⁹ just as Arcesilaus would later have done.⁴⁰ The Academy then could with equal justice be called a school of geometry or a school of metaphysics. But ‘living unnoticed’ for the mere sake of one’s personal pleasure was no option there; the Academy never became the Garden.

1.9. There is hardly more to be said regarding Aristotle. The mere fact that he regards ethics and politics as one whole already shows that the basic orientation of his ethical thinking radically differs from the Epicurean point of view. This orientation directly makes its influence felt in discussions of virtues such as magnificence (*EN* 4, 1122a18–1123a19) and greatness of soul (1123a34–1125a17). It also appears in Aristotle’s treatment of the proper striving for honour, which he regards as a nameless mean between φιλοτιμία and ἀφιλοτιμία (1125b1–25). That this perspective is diametrically opposed to Epicurus’ advice to ‘live unnoticed’ is a point too obvious to labour.

Now it is of course true that this rapid conclusion is based on a general and even one-sided presentation of Aristotle’s position, as it leaves the praise of the contemplative life at the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (10, 1177a12–1178b32) undiscussed. Nonetheless, this is not the place to enter at length into the notorious problem of the precise relation between these concluding remarks on intellectual contemplation and the rest of Aristotle’s ethical thought. However one wishes to interpret this relation, one can be sure that the turn to contemplation is not a turn towards a more ‘Epicurean’ perspective. Epicurus neither opted for an active life of politics nor for the theoretical life of contemplation, but for a third kind of life, that is, a life devoted to pleasure, which, in Aristotle’s view, is only a life for cattle (1, 1095b17–20). Again, the gap between both thinkers turns out to be unbridgeable.

³⁷ Cf. K. Trampedach (1994), 146–147.

³⁸ None other than Plutarch ranges him among philosophers who were politically inactive (*De tuenda* 135C).

³⁹ Diog. Laert. 4, 19, and Philodemus, *Hist. Acad.* col. xiv, 12–41.

⁴⁰ Diog. Laert. 4, 39.

Somewhat surprisingly, the most interesting Aristotelian passage in the context of our study is to be found in the discussion of φρόνησις in the sixth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. After having defined prudence as the ability to deliberate well about what is good and advantageous for oneself, for the sake of the good life in general (1140a25–28) and having demarcated its domain vis-à-vis other virtues of the intellect, Aristotle suddenly introduces a political aspect. There indeed turns out to be a φρόνησις περὶ πόλιν, which can be further subdivided into νομοθετική and πολιτική (1141b23–29). This, however, seems to be opposed to the common conviction that prudence is concerned with the individual himself and that it is the man who knows and minds his own business who is prudent, whereas politicians are busybodies rather than prudent (1141b29–1142a2). Aristotle then quotes Odysseus' words in the prologue of Euripides' *Philoctetes* (discussed above, 1.6.3) in support of this current view (1142a2–6). This is the most explicit reference to the ideal of a sequestered life far away from politics in Aristotle's ethical writings (excepting the passages about the contemplative life) and it is no doubt striking that it occurs in an objection against Aristotle's own position.

We indeed find here a beautiful example of Aristotle's working method, in which widespread convictions are used as a point of departure for further reflection and refining. The quotation from Euripides appears to connect prudence (φρονοῖν) with a concern for one's own interest (cf. 1142a7–9) and to disconnect it with the area of politics (ἀπραγμῶν). As such, it obviously forms a strong argument against a more political interpretation of prudence and this for at least two reasons. First of all, it proves to be perfectly in line with Aristotle's own definition of prudence—based as it is on common convictions as well—, which, as has been said, also focuses on the individual. Is Aristotle guilty of inconsistency on this point? Secondly, the objection gains strength when the background of the Euripidean ideal of ἀπραγμοσύνη is taken into account. The ἀπράγμων indeed succeeds in avoiding all of the toils and dangers which a political career entails and thus in safely managing his own affairs, whereas the politician is often ruined through his ambition. The implication is clear: if prudence indeed implies, even is, good deliberation of one's own individual good, it seems reasonable that the prudent person does not enter into politics.

Aristotle's reply is particularly short: perhaps one's own good can neither exist without household management nor without politics (1142a9–10: καίτοι ἴσως οὐκ ἔστι τὸ αὐτοῦ εὖ ἄνευ οἰκονομίας οὐδ' ἄνευ

πολιτείας).⁴¹ Even if the term ἰσως suggests a certain caution which indirectly acknowledges the strength of the objection, Aristotle thus persists in attributing a political aspect to prudence. His argument that both house and city are important for one's own personal interest should primarily be understood against the background of his famous anthropology, in which man is defined as a ζῷον πολιτικόν.⁴² Human beings can only reach their final end in the framework of a πόλις, which exists for the sake of the good life (*Pol.* 1, 1252b30).

The question remains, however, whether one should really engage in politics in order to achieve one's goal. Would it not be prudent to avoid politics and devote oneself as an ordinary citizen of the πόλις to the leisure of a theoretical life?⁴³ Although there are several good arguments that may point to such a conclusion,⁴⁴ it remains true that such an alternative is doomed to be one-sided (*Pol.* 7, 1325a16–30) and will never lead to complete happiness.⁴⁵ The tension between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* inevitably returns. As far as the former is concerned, Aristotle in any case insists that it is more honourable and even more divine to secure the good of a whole city than merely that of oneself (*EN* 1, 1094b7–10).⁴⁶ If that is true, the opposition between personal and public interest disappears and the widespread characterisation of politicians as imprudent busybodies proves to be unjustified. This makes room for the more moderate claim, defended in the above mentioned passage from the sixth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, that there is a political φρόνησις; it even makes room for the radical view endorsed in the third book of the *Politics* that prudence is actually the typical virtue of a ruler, rather than that of a subject (1277b25–30).

⁴¹ Aristotle adds that the way in which one should manage one's affairs is not clear and needs inquiry (1142a10–11: ἔτι δὲ τὰ αὐτοῦ πῶς δεῖ διοικεῖν, ἄδηλον καὶ σκεπτέον); for the interpretation of this vague argument, see R.A. Gauthier – J.Y. Jolif (1970), 2.2, 501–502.

⁴² Good recent discussions include W. Kullmann (1980); J.M. Cooper (1990) and D.J. Depew (1995); a convenient survey of the key passages also in R.G. Mulgan (1974).

⁴³ Or even to dwell as a foreigner in another city; cf. *Pol.* 7, 1324a16 and 28, which recalls Anaxagoras' decision, Aristippus' position in Xenophon, *Mem.* 2,1,13, and the Cynic position exemplified by Diogenes of Sinope; cf. W.L. Newman (1902), 320–322, and esp. S. Gastaldi (2003), 31–42.

⁴⁴ See esp. P.A. Vander Waerdt (1985); *contra*: J.A. Swanson (1992), 124–126.

⁴⁵ Cf. T. Irwin (1990), 81.

⁴⁶ One should note, moreover, that the citizens of Aristotle's ideal πόλις rule and are ruled in turn; see *Pol.* 7, 1332b26–29.

To conclude, Aristotle's discussion of the passage from Euripides' *Philoctetes* strikingly illustrates his ethical and political thinking. The ideal of an 'unnoticed life', or—in Euripidean terms—a life of ἀπραγμοσύνη, even apart from the question of whether it can be reconciled with the ideal of wisdom pursued in the contemplative life, proves in any case irreconcilable with the highest kind of φρόνησις pursued in the *vita activa*. Consequently, it will never bring about, in Aristotle's view, the happiness of the complete life.⁴⁷

1.10. The interim conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing brief survey is that there are no clear direct antecedents of the Epicurean doctrine of λάθῃ βιώσας. Most of Epicurus' philosophical predecessors were politically oriented thinkers who were favourably disposed towards (justified) fame and honour and the arguments that were proposed against participation in political life partly rested on extra-philosophical considerations and partly on the attractiveness of a *vita contemplativa*. It is clear that direct precursors of the Epicurean ideal of an 'unnoticed life' are unlikely to be found in such perspectives.

There is one name, however, which has deliberately been omitted for the time being, namely, Democritus. Cicero points to the nearly perfect similarity between the (physical) doctrines of Democritus and those of Epicurus (*nat. deor.* 1,73; cf. 1,93) and Plutarch even claims that Epicurus stole Democritus' doctrines verbatim (*Non posse* 1100A). If there is to be found any trace of the ideal of an 'unnoticed life' before Epicurus, it is probably in Democritus and the Democriteans.⁴⁸ This tradition deserves a more detailed investigation.

The study of Democritus is a particularly frustrating business, since we only have a collection of anecdotes and disconnected fragments (often of doubtful authenticity), many of which provide unreliable information. Moreover, the relevant material points in two diametrically opposed directions. Sometimes, Democritus appears as a public-spirited philosopher who showed great interest in political affairs and

⁴⁷ The history of the early Peripatos need not detain us here. The precise relation between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* presumably aroused no less discussion at that moment than it does now. Theophrastus seems to have given preference to the βίος θεωρητικός—even if he twice delivered his native city from tyrants (Plutarch, *Non posse* 1097B and *Adv. Colot.* 1126F)—, Dicaearchus to the βίος πρακτικός; cf. Cicero, *Att.* 2,16,3. The βίος ἀπολαυστικός did not have its supporters there.

⁴⁸ On the tradition of the Democriteans, see esp. the valuable study of J. Warren (2002).

was himself actively engaged in politics, whereas elsewhere, he rather appears as a sequestered thinker who focused on theoretical contemplation and avoided the turmoil of politics. Both alternatives should be examined in turn, beginning with the former.

1.10.1. According to the *Suda* (II, 44.11–12 = 68 A 2 DK), Democritus held office in Abdera and was honoured for his wisdom. At this point already, problems arise. Even if other sources which illustrate Democritus' wish to benefit his city in several ways (A 18 and A 19) and Abderite silver coins which bear the legend ἐπὶ Δημοκρίτῳ⁴⁹ may provide additional support to the late testimony from the *Suda*, they constitute too weak a foundation to build strong conclusions upon. The only element that seems certain is the (hardly surprising) observation that several aspects of Democritus' political thinking should be understood against the background of the contemporary political context of Abdera.⁵⁰ The greatest certainty possible concerning Democritus' own involvement in political affairs is that of a *non liquet*.⁵¹

Since our scanty information about Democritus' life proves of little help, we had better turn to his philosophy. Is there any evidence that Democritus advised to engage in politics and/or to pursue a great reputation? It is true that several fragments show a fairly positive appreciation of honour (e.g. B 95 and B 263) and office holders (e.g. B 265 and B 266), but they need not imply an exhortation to participate in public life oneself. Four of them, however, should be discussed in somewhat more detail.

Fragment B 267 immediately recalls the position of Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias* (rule belongs by nature to the stronger), but can also be understood in a somewhat less radical way (to rule is most suitable for those whose souls are well-ordered). If the latter interpretation⁵² holds true, Democritus may have regarded the philosopher as the best politician or more precisely as being best qualified to engage in politics. Due to the absence of any context and even given the fact

⁴⁹ J.F. Procopé (1989), 309, with n. 20 (where further literature can be found).

⁵⁰ See D. Lewis (1990) on fragment B 260.

⁵¹ J.F. Procopé (1989), 309 is inclined to give credit to the testimony of the *Suda*; G.J.D. Aalders (1950), 313 is more sceptical, as is C. Farrar (1988), 195. One may point to Cicero, *de orat.* 3.56, where Democritus is mentioned, together with Pythagoras and Anaxagoras, among the philosophers who *a regendis civitatibus totos se ad cognitionem rerum transtulerunt*.

⁵² Defended by C. Farrar (1988), 254.

that the authenticity of the fragment is not perfectly sure, such an interpretation is doomed to remain largely hypothetical. The fragment may be used to supplement information offered elsewhere, but does not yield compelling evidence in itself.

The same is true for B 77 (which belongs to the Democrates collection): “fame and wealth without intelligence are dangerous possessions”. According to M. Nill,⁵³ this implies that “fame and wealth, if made use of with intelligence, would be goods”. Unfortunately, this is not necessarily the only possible conclusion. The statement can perfectly stand on itself, as an evaluation of the fool’s conduct, without implying any opposition to the sage. Again, the fragment is simply too general and too short to be useful for the reconstruction of Democritus’ precise position.

With fragment B 252 we seem to be on firmer ground. Democritus here argues that one should attach the greatest importance to matters of the state and that the conduct of the individual citizen should not run counter to the public interest; for when the state is safe, all is safe, and when it is destroyed, all is destroyed (τούτου σφζομένου πάντα σφζεται καὶ τούτου διαφθειρομένου τὰ πάντα διαφθίρεται). This is obviously one of the best illustrations of the paramount importance of politics in Democritus’ thinking. At the same time, it strikingly illustrates its limits as well, since the fragment can after all easily be reconciled with (or even stems from?) a basically self-centred perspective. It is clear indeed that the state is appreciated because (and in so far as?) it offers security to the individual and, one may add, Democritus’ argument that the individual should avoid conduct which harms the city does not necessarily imply that he should also actively contribute to the general good. Even this fragment then does not offer decisive and unambiguous information about the preferability of entering political life. It would no doubt have been welcomed by public-spirited philosophers, but would not have caused too many problems for their quietistic colleagues either.

The last fragment to be discussed in this section is B 157. Plutarch informs us that Democritus advises to learn thoroughly the art of war⁵⁴ and to make great efforts, which bring about greatness and fame:

⁵³ (1985), 80.

⁵⁴ I see no reason to change the text of the manuscripts; cf., e.g., Q. Cataudella (1949); R. Westman (1955), 263–265; J.F. Procopé (1990), 41.

Δημόκριτος μὲν παραινεῖ τὴν τε πολεμικὴν τέχνην μεγίστην οὖσαν ἐκδιδάσκεισθαι καὶ τοὺς πόνους διώκειν, ἀφ' ὧν τὰ μεγάλα καὶ λαμπρὰ γίνεται τοῖς ἀνθρώποις. (*Adv. Colot.* 1126A)⁵⁵

“Democritus urges us to learn thoroughly the art of war, which is the greatest, and to pursue strenuous labours, which are for mankind the path to greatness and renown.” (transl. B. Einarson–Ph.H. De Lacy, modified)

This is a remarkable testimonium. Here at last, the term *παραινεῖ* unambiguously points to the explicit demand to engage in public life. Yet here, too, a word of caution is in place. First of all, attention should be given to the broader context of Plutarch's reference to Democritus' doctrine: that is, the aretalogy of political philosophers at the end of *Adversus Colotem*. Democritus' presence there, however, is not entirely unproblematic. It is motivated by the simple fact that he was attacked by Colotes (1126A). To a certain extent, the demands of his polemic forced Plutarch to introduce Democritus into his list, even if data concerning the latter's political accomplishments could hardly be found. Perhaps, Plutarch was simply unable to find one political achievement of Democritus, which would compel him to insert the philosopher into the list. Therefore, Democritus is the only philosopher in the whole aretalogy who is mentioned not because of an important political or military success, but because of a doctrine. If that is true, the passage offers an important *argumentum e silentio* that casts further doubt on the testimony of the *Suda* discussed above.

As to the doctrine mentioned by Plutarch, it can be connected to Democritus' works *On Tactics* and *On Fighting in Armour* (Diog. Laert. 9,48). It is not unlikely that he there dealt with the importance of his subject matter and observed that brilliant military deeds presuppose great toils but also lead to a great reputation. The question remains, however, whether his words should really be understood as direct advice (*παραινεῖ*) to enter such a brilliant military career. Plutarch is our only source here and he had his reasons to give such a biased interpretation of Democritus' thinking. Moreover, his reliability is even further questioned by the fact that parallel examples of similar distortions can be found in his works. He misrepresents, for instance, Epicurus' position in exactly the same way, by interpreting a merely descriptive observation as a normative tenet (cf. *infra*, 2.3.2.1d on *De tranq. an.* 465F–

⁵⁵ Cf. also *Non posse* 1100C, with J.F. Procopé (1990), 42.

466A). In light of these observations, the safest course may well be that of a cautious ἐποχή.

1.10.2. This conclusion perfectly illustrates the frustrating limitations imposed by our source material. Several fragments appear to suggest an interest in, and appreciation of, politics, but none offers really compelling evidence that Democritus indeed advised to engage in politics. This, however, is only one side of the picture. It remains to be seen whether Democritus offered arguments against participation in public life.

Fragment B 253 offers a smooth change between the present question and the previous one. Democritus there confronts his readers with a difficult dilemma. Good men can derive no benefit from neglecting their own affairs for other things; entering public life implies harming their personal interest (cf. also B 80). But if they refrain from entering public life, they will obtain a bad reputation, even if they do no wrong. Entering public life while doing wrong is no alternative either, since they will run the risk of both a bad reputation and corporeal suffering. In short, whether or not they engage in politics, they will in any case suffer personal damage. Democritus does not offer any solution to this dilemma. According to J.F. Procopé,⁵⁶ (at least) two alternatives remain open to the good man: “he might [...] pack his bags and go off, as Democritus himself was said to have done, on extensive foreign travels. Alternatively, he might adopt the attitude of high patriotism prescribed in B 252. Concluding that his private interests and the well-being of the city are inseparable, that to participate in public affairs is by no means to ‘neglect his own for other business’, he might after all embark upon public life, despite the ‘danger’ [...] of coming to grief thereby”. The latter alternative is too Aristotelian to my mind and does not directly follow from B 252, whereas the former may run counter to the spirit of the same fragment B 252. One may note in passing that the good man might be able to escape the dilemma by opting for an unnoticed life. Yet Democritus does not mention this alternative either. One wonders whether he wished to offer any solution at all and if not (cf. ἀνάγκη δὲ ἀμαρτάνειν), what purpose his aporetic dilemma serves.

I would suggest that it is best understood in the context of a self-centred ethics, as a challenging invitation to base personal conduct on a

⁵⁶ (1989), 315–316.

careful examination of everyday life. The dilemma indeed is about the personal disadvantage of the individual good men (τοῖς χρηστοῖσιν οὐ συμφέρον), as opposed to the public interest. Against the background of this perspective, Democritus offers a sober calculation of different disadvantages, which seems to rest on a fairly unbiased attitude towards, and evaluation of, the political reality of his day. Such a sober calculation shows that oversimplified and rash decisions should be avoided and that one should fully take into account the demands of real life, which are usually more complex than those of theory. If that is true, the fragment has a much wider scope than the dilemma which it thematises and indirectly concerns the necessary conditions for well-considered behaviour.

An analogous conclusion may be obtained from the famous fragment B 3, where Democritus claims that the man who would reach tranquillity of mind (εὐθυμία) must neither engage in many activities, either private or public, nor go beyond his natural capacities in what he is doing. These words became particularly successful and left many traces in later authors. Plutarch interprets them as an advice to inactivity (ἀπραξία) and directly connects them with laziness (ἄθθυμία), softness (μαλακία) and even betrayal of friends, family, and country (*De tranq. an.* 465CD). Here we obviously see a polemicist at work and a malicious one too. Plutarch's interpretation, if it may be so called, is only based on the first part of Democritus' advice,⁵⁷ which is further understood in a much too absolute and radical way by equating μὴ πολλά unfairly with the *alpha privativum*. Yet it would be unwise to dismiss Plutarch's objections without further comment, for he does point to a problem in Democritus' position (albeit in a quite exaggerated way). The phrase μὴ πολλά πράσσειν obviously shows a strong tendency to limit action and what follows is neither an explanation nor an introduction of a second domain, but a further limitation of the field of μὴ πολλά.⁵⁸ Moreover, this advice extends not merely to the public domain

⁵⁷ G. Siefert (1908), 9 suggested that the whole passage is not directed against Democritus, but against "einen Epikureer vom Schlage des Colotes, wenn nicht gegen diesen selbst", who misrepresented Democritus' advice in order to make it fit better with the Epicurean political philosophy. This suggestion, however, insufficiently takes into account Plutarch's polemical techniques and rests on the presupposition of the *Quellenforscher* that Plutarch used his sources in a completely uncritical way; cf. G. Roskam (2005b), 362–363.

⁵⁸ Seneca's paraphrase *multa aut maiora viribus nostris* in *dial.* 5,6,3 thus misrepresents Democritus' position. Democritus rather advises not to do *multa* and within this small

(ξυνῆ), where it *prima facie* seems to advocate a quietistic position, but even to that of private life (ἰδίῃ). One begins to wonder whether Democritus did not do away with too many opportunities for self-realisation. Plutarch's objection (465C) can then be reformulated in a fairer way: is this tranquillity of mind not bought at a far too expensive price?

It is interesting to note that other ancient authors struggled with the same problem. In Seneca's view, Democritus' advice of μὴ πολλὰ πρήσσειν referred to useless affairs (*dial.* 9,13,1: *ad supervacua scilicet referentem*; cf. fragment B 285) and to a life characterised by *inquieta inertia* (12,3). For if necessary, we must engage in many, even countless affairs, both public and private (13,1: *nam si necessaria sunt, et privatim et publice non tantum multa sed innumerabilia agenda sunt*). It is doubtful whether this is what Democritus really wanted to say. Seneca rather introduces a *Democritus interpretatus*, but his interpretation results from basically the same problem as Plutarch's polemical attack. Marcus Aurelius faced the same difficulty as well and tried to replace Democritus' advice by a better alternative: do what is necessary and act in accordance with the rational demands of a ζῶον πολιτικόν (4,24,1–2). The Epicurean version of Democritus' advice is to be found in Diogenes of Oenoanda (fr. 113). It is interesting to see that Diogenes seems to have no problems with Democritus' phrase μὴ πολλὰ πρήσσειν, which he nonetheless further specifies in a more Epicurean way by adding that one should avoid tackling troublesome affairs (fr. 113,4–5).

All of these passages show that Democritus' words became a classic point of reference in the context of a discussion of the subject of tranquillity of mind, but also that it was often regarded as problematic. What could have motivated Democritus' dissuasion to engage in many affairs and how should it be understood? Two further passages may help in reconstructing his position.

First of all, the words that immediately follow Democritus' advice have been preserved in Stobaeus (*Flor.* 4,39,25). From these it can be inferred that Democritus in the first place warned against initiatives elicited by good fortune and recommended moderation. The precise relevance of these elements is further clarified by the important fragment B 191,⁵⁹ where Democritus advises to be content with what is present and to pay little heed to what is envied. What should be

domain not to do *maiora viribus nostra*. The same inaccuracy returns in Diogenes of Oenoanda, fr. 113,2–8.

⁵⁹ Discussed in detail in J. Warren (2002), 44–72.

avoided in any case is other-directed behaviour, for a man who constantly admires people admired by others, is always forced to contrive novelties (ἐπικαινουργεῖν) and his desires will often incite him even to break the laws. At this point, it is useful to return to Plutarch for a moment. Somewhat further on in his *De tranquillitate animi*, he refers to the unwise but common behaviour of comparing oneself with those who are better off: prisoners regard as happy those who have been set free; they, in their turn, men born free, and they again citizens, and the citizens the rich, and the rich satraps, and the satraps kings, and the kings gods (470B). Yet another series follows: local office holders wish to become patricians and when they succeed in reaching that status, they desire to be praetor, then consul, then consul proclaimed first (470C).⁶⁰ These uninterrupted series perfectly illustrate the meaning of Democritus' ἐπικαινουργεῖν and the part which good fortune plays in the whole process. They also show the vital importance of moderation and limitation of desires,⁶¹ which helps in freeing oneself from the perverse mechanism of ἐπικαινουργεῖν and instead focuses on one's own good. That this good should not be sought in external advantages, but is primarily to be found in the soul, is more than once underlined by Democritus (see esp. B 146 and B 171).

The previous analysis thus shows that Democritus' advice of μὴ πολλὰ πρὸς σέιν, further limited by the demand not to go beyond one's natural capacities, should be understood as a dissuasion from the ever-going undertaking of new initiatives (ἐπικαινουργεῖν) and an invitation to concentrate on one's present good, which requires no great projects but is easily attainable in one's own soul. If that is true, the fragment does not directly thematise the question of whether one should participate in politics or rather opt for a sequestered life. Similarly to B 253, it mainly deals with a more general mental attitude and as such illustrates one of the crucial steps towards a more interiorised ethics.

There remains still one important fragment to be discussed, which at first sight may contain an echo of the motif of an 'unnoticed life':

ἦλθον γὰρ εἰς Ἀθήνας καὶ οὐ τις με ἔγνωκεν (B 116).

"For I came to Athens and nobody knew me".

⁶⁰ Cf. Seneca, *dial.* 10,17,5–6.

⁶¹ A theme which frequently returns in Democritus' fragments; cf., e.g., B 58; B 70; B 198; B 211; B 219; B 223; B 246; B 284; B 286.

This looks very much like a verbatim quotation from Democritus. Unfortunately, the statement is there without any context, which renders it particularly difficult to formulate its precise meaning and scope. It notably leads to the following questions:

1. Can Democritus' statement be traced back to a historical event, i.e. did he really visit Athens and did he remain unknown there?
2. If yes, was that historical event worth mentioning after all?
3. If yes, did Democritus deliberately pursue the ideal of remaining unnoticed at Athens?
4. If yes, then why?

As to the first question, Democritus' presence in Athens is explicitly denied by Demetrius of Phalerum (Diog. Laert. 9,37). According to the Peripatetic philosopher, Democritus despised the city and preferred to make a place famous rather than acquiring fame for himself from a place. This, however, is too weak a basis to deny Democritus' presence at Athens. For first of all, one should note that the motivation mentioned by Demetrius can perfectly be reconciled with Democritus' decision to remain unknown at Athens. Second, there is no clear reason why Democritus himself should have misrepresented his experiences in Athens. Third, the fact that there exists a similar tradition regarding Heraclitus (Diog. Laert. 9,15) and Zeno of Elea (9,23) arouses further suspicions about the reliability of Demetrius' information. There are no compelling reasons, then, to disbelieve Democritus' statement. One may even go one step further. According to K. Freeman,⁶² "it seems best to assume that Democritus did visit Athens, but that Demetrius, though an Athenian, could find no one who knew of his passage". This is an interesting (even if unprovable) suggestion. If it is true, this passage from Demetrius actually offers a strong argument in favour of the historicity of Democritus' *λαθεῖν* in Athens.

The second question is more difficult to answer. As Democritus came from Abdera, a city the inhabitants of which had no great reputation for intelligence,⁶³ one could argue that, from the Athenian perspective at least, the fact that a foreigner like Democritus remained unnoticed in Athens was not surprising at all. The opposite would have been more remarkable and worth mentioning indeed. But Democritus' perspective of course differed from that of the Athenians, and he apparently had his

⁶² (1966), 291.

⁶³ Evidence in J. Warren (2002), 10.

own reasons to draw attention to his experiences at Athens. His λαθεῖν is remarkable whether he dwelt in Athens for a longer period⁶⁴ or if he arrived there at a moment when he was already famous in Abdera and in other cities, and may have thus reasonably expected to be recognised in Athens as well (both alternatives do not exclude one another to be sure).

Does the passage show that Democritus deliberately pursued the ideal of an ‘unnoticed life’ in Athens? Not necessarily. The fragment by itself can equally be understood as a complaint,⁶⁵ a grudging resignation, or even as an indignant attack of an injured thinker. Other ancient sources, however, make it more likely that it indeed reflects a positive choice of Democritus himself. Diogenes Laertius notes that Democritus was not eager to be recognised (9,36: μὴ σπουδάσαι γνωσθῆναι); Aelian emphatically states that he desired to remain unnoticed and that he put this into practice with great determination (*VH* 4,20: ἐπιθυμῆσαι λαθεῖν καὶ ἐν ἔργῳ θέσθαι πάνυ σφόδρα τοῦτο).

This immediately leads to the last and most difficult question: why did Democritus adopt this course? Valerius Maximus connects it to the philosopher’s admirable diligence. His great enthusiasm for learning simply took up all his time (8,7 ext. 4). This, however, would imply that Democritus’ unnoticed life was not a positive ideal but merely an unintended side effect. A much more plausible interpretation can be found in Diogenes Laertius (9,36) and Cicero (*Tusc.* 5,104), both of whom argue that Democritus’ deliberate avoidance of being recognised was motivated by a contempt of fame. If that is true, a new problem arises, however. Why after all did Democritus feel the need to underline himself that he remained unknown in Athens? What is the purpose of this autobiographical self-presentation? Is it not a clever way of pursuing fame by claiming to be indifferent to it (cf. Cicero: *qui gloriatur a gloria se afuisse*)? Or does he offer himself as an example worthy of imitation? Also, what is the precise importance of Athens in the whole story? Was his desire to remain unnoticed only confined to Athens or was it a more general ideal? At this point, our sources remain silent and this frustrating silence definitively precludes full understanding of the fragment. It is true that several sources appear to connect Democritus’

⁶⁴ This is attested by Valerius Maximus, 8,7 ext. 4 (= fragment A 11: *Athenis autem compluribus annis moratus*), but his testimony (rejected by K. Freeman (1966), 291) can neither be proven, nor refuted.

⁶⁵ Cf. F.K. Voros (1973), 195.

statement with a deliberate pursuit of an ‘unnoticed life’, motivated by indifference to fame, but even these sources in the end merely offer a possible interpretation rather than a safe indication of its original meaning. Our final evaluation of this enigmatic fragment, then, can only be a *non liquet*.

1.10.3. From the above discussion, Democritus’ view on politics appears as rather ambivalent. This need not only be the result of the fragmentary tradition. It is not unlikely that Democritus did not express himself clearly about the desirability of participation in public life and that his position left ample room for personal interpretation. It is significant in this respect that later Democriteans followed completely different directions. Epicurus’ teacher Nausiphanes endorsed a politically oriented position (cf. *infra* 3.2.1 and 4.2.3.1b) and Anaxarchus of Abdera accompanied Alexander on his expedition to the East. Anaxarchus’ pupil Pyrrho, on the other hand, preferred a sequestered life, but strikingly enough, his choice was apparently not influenced by Democritus’ position. Diogenes Laertius at least tells us that he withdrew from public life because he heard an Indian reproach his teacher Anaxarchus on the ground that he would never teach anyone else to be good while he himself paid tribute in a royal palace (9,63). This anecdote shows that Pyrrho’s decision to withdraw was based on a concern for pedagogical credibility, which presupposes consistency between words and deeds. This view may have influenced his disciples Timon (9,112) and Philo of Athens (9,69), who both opted for a sequestered life. It is not impossible that Pyrrho’s conduct even exerted some influence on Epicurus. It is true that Pyrrho’s motivation to withdraw from society radically differs from the arguments that were elaborated by Epicurus, but we know that Epicurus was fascinated by Pyrrho’s behaviour and often asked Nausiphanes for information about him (9,64). Pyrrho’s deliberate choice for a life in solitude (9,63: ἐρημάζειν) may have been one of the aspects of his behaviour that stuck in Epicurus’ mind and indirectly shaped his own ideal. It could have offered him an attractive example and a source of inspiration. But it did not offer him the material with which he had to construct the building of his own philosophical thinking.

1.10.4. The interim conclusion obtained above can now be completed in order to reach a more definitive one. Whereas the motif of an ‘unnoticed life’ remained almost entirely absent from the works of most

of Epicurus' predecessors, it occasionally occurs in the Democritean tradition. But even there, as far as can still be inferred from the scanty information which we have at our disposal, it never became part and parcel of a broader ethical doctrine and it was never defended by a systematic theoretical argumentation. It was more of an idea that turned up in several contexts and disappeared in others. It was an idea, however, which greatly appealed to Epicurus, who gave it a meaningful place in his own ethical thinking. At this point, we can grant ourselves the (hardly Epicurean) pleasure of turning to the Epicurean doctrine of *λάτρε βιώσας* itself.

CHAPTER TWO

EPICURUS

τὴν ἡδονὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ τέλος λέγομεν
εἶναι τοῦ μακαρίως ζῆν

(*Epist. ad Men.* 128)

2.1. *Introduction*

2.1.1. Writing on Epicurus means that the first word should be pleasure. For indeed, pleasure is at the centre of Epicurus' philosophy, the criterion to which any action should be referred (*RS* 25). It is clear, then, from the very beginning that Epicurus' advice to 'live unnoticed' (λάθε βιώσας; fr. 551 Us.) is based on his conviction that such a life would contribute to one's pleasure.

This conclusion, however, though basically correct, raises more questions than it answers. For one could easily object—as ancient authors indeed have done (Plutarch, *Non posse* 1097A–1100D; cf. Cicero, *fin.* 5,70)—that the pleasures derived from a good reputation among the people, or from various kinds of honours, or even from the arduous task of serving the public interest, far outweigh those procured by an 'unnoticed life'. Furthermore, Epicurus' advice probably ran counter to commonly held convictions about the way to reach happiness. Indeed, ordinary people were presumably inclined to consider the famous statesmen from the present or the past or the much admired victors in the Panhellenic games much more fortunate than themselves. In any case, the striving for a good reputation and for public honours and the pursuit of political offices that could enhance this honour were important components of the popular morality that Epicurus' contemporaries inherited from their predecessors.¹ This traditional perspective will have made Epicurus' link between pleasure and an 'unnoticed life' strange if not problematic to most of his contemporaries. Should we prefer to be ὁ δεινός rather than, for example, Pericles or Alexander?

¹ K.J. Dover (1974), 226–234 and L.B. Carter (1986), 1–25.

2.1.2. A more nuanced and detailed reconstruction of Epicurus' view can only be gained through a careful examination of the different sources we have at our disposal. A methodological remark is in place here, as the different nature of these sources may well require a different approach. On the one hand, several complete works of Epicurus have come down to us. This has the great advantage that the study of Epicurus' philosophy need not merely rely on second-hand information. Analysis of these works can both lead to a reconstruction of (the outlines of) Epicurus' philosophical position and provide a sound basis upon which subsequent evaluation of other sources can rest.

On the other hand, much information also reached us through various secondary sources, the reliability of which is sometimes questionable. Interesting material is to be found in doxographic sources, although these also contain many commonplaces and generalisations that insufficiently illustrate the particularity of Epicurus' philosophy. Moreover, Epicurus' position is sometimes 'updated' in these sources by its introduction into a general, theoretical framework that is itself based on later scholastic systematisations. A clear example is the 'Epicurean' doctrine ἀμαρτήματα ἄνισα εἶναι (Diog. Laert. 10,120 = fr. 521 Us.), which is obviously fashioned after the notorious Stoic tenet of the fundamental equality of all faults.² Even the famous distinction between katastematic and kinetic pleasure should perhaps not be traced back to Epicurus himself but rather to a later doxographic tradition based on Carneades.³

A great deal of useful information can be gathered from the anti-Epicurean polemical authors such as Plutarch or Lactantius, although they have often proven to be less reliable than the doxographers, as their selection and presentation of Epicurus' doctrines is thoroughly conditioned by their polemical goals. As a result, their often biased references to, or unfair interpretations of, Epicurus' tenets have to be completed and nuanced by means of other sources. Even when they claim to quote Epicurus verbatim (e.g. Plutarch, *Adv. Colot.* 1125C = fr. 554 Us.: γράφοντες αὐταῖς λέξεσιν), they have introduced these quotations into a new context, which might slightly or even more fundamentally alter their original meaning or scope.

² See, e.g., Diog. Laert. 7,120 (= *SVF* 1,224 and 3,527); Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2,7,11¹ (= *SVF* 3,528) and 2,7,11^o (= *SVF* 3,529); Cicero, *parad.* 20–26; on the meaning of the paradox, see O. Luschkat (1958) and G. Roskam (2005a).

³ B. Nikolsky (2001).

One could expect that the references to Epicurus' doctrines which are to be found in later Epicurean authors are much more reliable. This is generally true, even though in this case as well, a certain caution is in order. Lucretius, for instance, is undoubtedly a good source for Epicurean philosophy, but his *De rerum natura*, while generally faithful to Epicurus' basic convictions, is written in a different context, and has to take into account later criticisms which Epicurus himself did not face.⁴ The same holds true for authors like Philodemus and Diogenes of Oenoanda.

It is clear that these observations all point in the same direction: absolute preference should be given to the extant complete texts of Epicurus himself. This leads to a sharp dichotomy between primary and secondary sources, which also has important methodological consequences, leading to the following approach:

- [a] The extant writings of Epicurus himself should be examined first, as they give the most secure information and provide the criterion to evaluate the other, secondary sources.
- [b] All other sources have to play a subordinate part. The information which they offer can be accepted if it is in line with the results obtained in [a], and should be rejected if they are at odds with them.

However, there is more than one *caveat* which makes this clear-cut approach, attractive though it may be, quite problematic.

First of all, one should not abstract from the specific nature of most of Epicurus' writings themselves, which might disqualify them as an absolute criterion. It is true that both the collections such as the *Kύρια Δόξαι* and the *Sententiae Vaticanae* and the letters such as the *Letter to Menoeceus* have a quite general perspective—the latter addressing not only one individual person but also the broader public of fellow Epicureans (καὶ κοινῇ καὶ ἰδίᾳ; fr. [59] ²Arr.; cf. *Epist. ad Her.* 37 and *Epist. ad Pyth.* 85)—, but this general nature also entails many omissions. Epicurus does not merely avoid detailed or elaborate argumentation or explicit polemical attacks against philosophical opponents, but he also omits implications of, or exceptions to general doctrines.⁵

⁴ P.H. De Lacy (1948) and R.M. Strozier (1985); see, however, also D. Sedley (1998a).

⁵ Even fundamental tenets may be omitted when they are not directly relevant. Accordingly, the *Letter to Menoeceus* contains no reference to the doctrine of friendship (except perhaps the vague τὸν ὅμοιον σεαυτῷ in 135), nor to the theory of law and

If Epicurus' writings retain their privileged place, they also require a complementary perspective.

Moreover, it is important to underline that comparatively little has survived from Epicurus' voluminous (Diog. Laert. 10,26) œuvre, and that most of the extant works have come down to us thanks to the selection of one doxographic source. This choice was far from unreasoned, to be sure, and one could add that some works could partly be recovered from the carbonized Herculaneum papyri (esp. Epicurus' Περὶ φύσεως, but also fragments of his correspondence). Nonetheless, by far the greatest part of Epicurus' writings have been lost. In the context of this study, the loss of Epicurus' Περὶ βίῳ is especially to be deplored. According to M. Schofield, this important work in four books not only contained a rejection of participation in politics (book I; Diog. Laert. 10,119 = fr. 8 Us.) and the cynic way of life (book II; Diog. Laert. 10,119 = fr. 14 Us.), but also described the positive advice of opting for a sequestered life, far away from the crowd.⁶ If Schofield is right, (one of) the most important source(s) for our study is lost.

Rebus sic stantibus, a certain rehabilitation of the secondary sources is necessary, which implies an adjustment of our approach:

- [a'] Epicurus' extant writings should be examined first, and remain to a certain extent the point of reference, *not* because they can be regarded as an absolute criterion for evaluation, but because they provide the general theoretical framework into which the information gathered from other sources should be placed. They admit of a complementary perspective that can offer details, nuances, and exceptions.
- [b'] This complementary perspective is to be found in the secondary sources. These sources contain interesting additional material, which should in principle be reconcilable with the general perspective obtained in [a'], but which also completes it in different ways.

It is clear that in this approach, the radical dichotomy between primary and secondary sources is considerably mitigated (though not completely

justice, *not* because they are unimportant as such, but because they do not pose any problem for Menoeceus; see A. Long (1986), 296.

⁶ M. Schofield (2000), 436–437; cf. Id. (1999), 741; M. Erler – M. Schofield (1999), 669 and already R. Joly (1956), 144.

abandoned). In line with this approach, I shall first focus on Epicurus' extant writings and examine in which way and to what extent they contribute to our understanding of the maxim *λάθε βιώσας*. It will be shown more precisely that these primary sources contain both general elements that make their influence felt on nearly every aspect of Epicurus' moral philosophy, including his advice to 'live unnoticed', and more concrete information about his political philosophy and his avoidance of the multitude. The conclusions obtained from this analysis will then be completed by a discussion of the secondary sources. This discussion will offer much new material, but will also show how the general features of Epicurus' thinking even reappear in its most concrete details. Finally, I shall briefly deal with the question whether Epicurus had any specific motivation to give his advice of 'living unnoticed', apart from his theoretical argumentation.

2.2. *The maxim *λάθε βιώσας* and Epicurus' extant writings*

One of the sad consequences of the manuscript tradition of Epicurus' works is that the maxim *λάθε βιώσας* has in the end applied its own advice. For indeed, it nowhere appears in the extant writings of Epicurus, leading, as it were, its own hidden life, far away from inquisitive or boring scholars. This observation is not without importance. At first sight, Epicurus' advice appears as a particularly concise formulation of a general rule. As such, it would not have been out of place in the *Κύρια Δόξαι* or the *Sententiae Vaticanae*, for it would have added to the list one more adequate expression of an important aspect of the Epicurean way of life. Has Epicurus forgotten about this advice when putting together his *Κύρια Δόξαι*? Probably not. As will appear from the rest of this chapter, it is more likely that he had good reasons for omitting it from his collection.

Even if Epicurus' extant writings do not contain the maxim *λάθε βιώσας*, they remain important for its interpretation because they offer vital information about the general context in which it should be understood. The following discussion of this information falls into two parts. First, I shall focus on three general aspects of Epicurus' moral thinking which I consider important for a correct understanding of his advice to 'live unnoticed'. Since these aspects are well known, they will be discussed very briefly and only insofar as they are relevant for the maxim *λάθε βιώσας*. Subsequently, I shall turn to two more specific and

interrelated issues which more directly bear upon the meaning of the maxim, viz. Epicurus' attitude towards politics and towards the multitude.

2.2.1. Epicurus' advice λάθε βιώσας should be understood against the background of three general components in his ethical thinking. These three components, which are prominent in his extant works, can easily be connected to one another and find their ultimate motivation in the final end, that is, pleasure.

a) First of all, Epicurus wishes to cure the soul of his followers from all irrational fears and vain desires. His philosophy is basically *Seelenheilung* (*SV* 54 and 64) and his arguments are therapeutic.⁷ As a consequence, his students are not only expected to listen attentively and try to understand his philosophy on an intellectual level; they also have to appropriate his ideas by uninterrupted training and meditation, and even learn them by heart.⁸ Collections such as the *Κύρια Δόξαι* or the *Sententiae Vaticanae* play a crucial part in this therapeutic process, offering the most important—as well as the most effective⁹ and concise—elements to the reader.

This therapeutic framework within which Epicurus' philosophy is developed also provides the context in which the maxim λάθε βιώσας should be understood. Indeed, the maxim should *not* be regarded as a merely theoretical tenet, but rather as an advice that contributes to the therapy of the soul and that has important consequences for the life of those who follow it. As we shall see (*infra*, 2.3.1c), this therapeutic context does not merely determine the scope and meaning of the maxim, but even the way in which it is formulated.

b) One of the most famous aspects of Epicurus' ethical thinking is his distinction between three kinds of desires: natural and necessary, natural though not necessary, and neither natural nor necessary (*RS* 29; *SV* 20; cf. *Epist. ad Men.* 127). The Epicurean sage will especially set himself to satisfying the first kind of desires, which are lim-

⁷ M. Nussbaum (1986).

⁸ See, e.g., *Epist. ad Men.* 122 (μελετᾶν οὖν χρή...); 124 (συνέθιζε...); 131 (συνεθίζειν); 135 (ταῦτα οὖν καὶ τὰ τούτοις συγγενῇ μελέτα πρὸς σεαυτὸν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός); *Epist. ad Her.* 35–36 and 83; *Epist. ad Pyth.* 84 and 116; cf. J. J. Salem (1989), 15–17 on the imagery of digestion.

⁹ J.F. Duvernoy (1984), 176–177.

ited¹⁰ and easily fulfilled, and will completely neglect the third, unlimited kind, which are only attractive on the basis of vain opinions (κεναὶ δόξαι). Most people, on the other hand, erroneously pursue exactly these empty and unlimited desires, and as a consequence never cease to look ahead, meanwhile postponing their pleasure (*SV* 14 and 30).

This distinction between desires, and the concept of limitation that is connected with it, is of paramount importance for the interpretation of the maxim λάθε βιώσας, as it is on this basis that Epicurus formulated his advice. Indeed, those who disregard the maxim and strive for fame, try to satisfy an unlimited desire that is neither natural nor necessary, and will thus depend on the future, whereas those who pursue an ‘unnoticed life’ remain within the limits of nature and are able to enjoy the present. This may well be the core of Epicurus’ argument concerning the maxim.

c) No less famous than the trichotomy of desires is Epicurus’ principle of rational *calculus* (συμμέτρησις; *Epist. ad Men.* 130). This principle is very clearly expounded in the *Letter to Menoeceus*. Every choice (αἵρεσις) and aversion (φυγή) should be evaluated by the pleasure it gives (129), but this evaluation requires comparative reasoning. Even if it is true that all pleasure is good as such, one would sometimes prefer pains because they will lead to greater pleasures. All pleasure is good but not all pleasures are choiceworthy, just as all pain is an evil though not all pain is to be avoided (*ibid.*). It is no coincidence that this famous principle so often returns both in Epicurus’ extant works (*RS* 8; *SV* 16 and 71) and in later sources (e.g. fr. 158, 439 and 442 Us.). Its importance can hardly be overestimated. It leads to what I would call a moral *philosophy of conditional qualifying*, which starts from a few absolute truths (e.g. pleasure as the τέλος) that are never questioned¹¹ and for the rest qualifies and nuances every statement: “*x* is to be pursued *if...*”, “*y* should be avoided *unless...*”.¹² As we shall see, such conditional qualifications appear in many of Epicurus’ texts and fragments.¹³

¹⁰ On the fundamental importance of the notion of limit (πέρας or ὄρος) in Epicurus’ (moral) thinking, see esp. P. De Lacy (1969) and J. Salem (1989), 83–99.

¹¹ According to Torquatus, Epicurus did not even see the need to prove them by elaborate argumentation (Cicero, *fin.* 1,30).

¹² Whence the paramount importance of φρόνησις (valued even higher than philosophy); *Epist. ad Men.* 132.

¹³ A particularly illustrative example of this approach, as K. Algra pointed out to me, is to be found in *SV* 51 (on sexual intercourse).

This principle of rational *calculus* is important for the maxim λάθε βιώσας, first because it offers what we may take to be one of its pre-suppositions. Epicurus' advice is not based on personal taste but on rational arguments. Nor should it be followed on the basis of unreasoned preferences, for the man who acts without comparative judgement (ἀνεπιλογιστός)¹⁴ does not fare better than the one who pursues unlimited desires (*SV* 63; cf. also *SV* 11). Moreover, the principle of *calculus* also helps to explain why the maxim λάθε βιώσας is not introduced into the Κύρια Δόξαι or the *Sententiae Vaticanae*. Devoid of any context, it should have been understood as absolute and unqualified advice that has to be followed under all circumstances. This, of course, runs counter to the *calculus*, which implies that the maxim has its exceptions.

2.2.2. On the basis of the three foregoing general considerations, the maxim λάθε βιώσας can be interpreted as advice that is both therapeutic and rationally reflected upon, which cures the soul of some of its unlimited desires, but the value of which can always be reconsidered under special circumstances. There is, however, more to the advice than this. Traditionally, the maxim is interpreted against the background of Epicurus' social and political philosophy, and is directly connected with his doctrine μὴ πολιτεύεσθαι (fr. 8 Us. = Diog. Laert. 10,119 etc.) and his avoidance of the multitude (fr. 187 Us.). As this interpretation (albeit somewhat too narrowly) generally makes sense, Epicurus' statements on these topics in his extant works can make the rather general and formal results obtained so far somewhat more concrete.

Again, the loss of the first book of Περί βίων, (partly?) devoted to a rejection of participation in politics and an attack on tyranny (Diog. Laert. 10,119), is regrettable.¹⁵ In the preserved *Letter to Menoeceus*,

¹⁴ On the meaning of the term ἀνεπιλογιστός, see M. Schofield (1996) (against G. Arrighetti (1952) and others).

¹⁵ A somewhat different interpretation has been proposed by M.L. Silvestre (1995), 137, who regards the second book as a specification of the first one: "Nel I libro *Sui generi di vita* egli dice che il saggio non parteciperà alla vita politica, ma nel II libro specifica il senso di tale affermazione: il saggio non eserciterà la tirannide né vivrà alla maniera dei cinici. Tra questi due estremi consiste la saggezza e tra questi due estremi si situa anche l'ideale dello Stato secondo Epicuro". It is much more likely, however, that the tenets developed in the second book should not be interpreted as specifications of the more general thesis of book I, and that both books could be read separately, dealing with different kinds of lives. Moreover, it makes more sense—both on the basis of content and because of the formal criterion of parallelism—to connect, in the passage from

on the other hand, nothing is said about politics, nor does one find in it the well-defined and fixed tenets that were later reconstructed in the doxographic tradition. Epicurus rather provides more general criteria that can guide the conduct of his followers, also regarding politics.

a) Interesting information is to be found in the *Κύρια Δόξαι* and the *Sententiae Vaticanae*. Near the beginning of the former collection, three doctrines can be found which are important for our study:

RS 6 “Ενεκα τοῦ θαρρεῖν ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἥν κατὰ φύσιν ἀρχῆς καὶ βασιλείας ἀγαθόν, ἐξ ὧν ἂν ποτε τοῦτο οἷός τ’ ἦ παρασκευάζεσθαι.

“In order to get confidence from other men, there was the natural good of public office and kingship, from which one is sometimes able to reach that end.”

RS 7 “Ἐνδοξοὶ καὶ περίβλεπτοί τινες ἐβουλήθησαν γενέσθαι, τὴν ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀσφάλειαν οὕτω νομίζοντες περιποιήσεσθαι. ὥστε εἰ μὲν ἀσφαλὴς ὁ τῶν τοιούτων βίος, ἀπέλαβον τὸ τῆς φύσεως ἀγαθόν· εἰ δὲ μὴ ἀσφαλὴς, οὐκ ἔχουσιν οὐ ἔνεκα ἐξ ἀρχῆς κατὰ τὸ τῆς φύσεως οἰκεῖον ὠρέχθησαν.

“Some men wished to become famous and respected, believing that they would thus gain security from other men. Thus if the life of such men is secure, they acquired the natural good, but if it is not secure, they do not have that for the sake of which they strove from the beginning according to what is naturally congenial.” (transl. B. Inwood – L.P. Gerson, strongly modified)

RS 14 Τῆς ἀσφαλείας τῆς ἐξ ἀνθρώπων γενομένης μέχρι τινὸς δυνάμει τε ἐξερευστικῇ καὶ εὐπορίᾳ εὐλκιρνεστάτη γίνεται ἢ ἐκ τῆς ἡσυχίας καὶ ἐκχωρήσεως τῶν πολλῶν ἀσφάλεια.

“Even though security from other people comes to a certain extent by means of the power to repel [attacks] and by means of prosperity, the purest security is that which comes from a quiet life and withdrawal from the many.” (transl. B. Inwood – L.P. Gerson, strongly modified)

These three doctrines deal with the topic of the Epicurean’s security, which, according to Schofield, “supplies the clue to the motivation of all his social and political thinking”.¹⁶ I wonder whether this topic, of paramount importance indeed, has not been misunderstood by many

Diogenes Laertius (10,119), οὐδὲ πολιτεύσεσθαι with οὐδὲ τυραννεύειν as subjects of Book I, and οὐδὲ κυνείν with οὐδὲ πτωχεύειν as subjects of Book II.

¹⁶ M. Schofield (1999), 749; cf. also A. Barigazzi (1983).

specialists of Epicurus. The phrase ἀσφάλεια ἐξ ἀνθρώπων is traditionally interpreted as “security *against* other persons”.¹⁷ I think this interpretation is problematic for purely linguistic reasons. As far as I can see, *LSJ* nowhere acknowledges that this is a possible meaning of the preposition ἐκ, and moreover, in Epicurus’ texts, security *against* others is expressed by the much more common combination of πρὸς or κατὰ with the accusative.¹⁸ I would propose an alternative interpretation which to my mind makes better sense of Epicurus’ idiosyncratic Greek. I suggest ἀσφάλεια ἐξ ἀνθρώπων does not mean “security *against* others” but “security *coming from* others”, in line with the less ambiguous meaning of its counterpart βλάβαι ἐξ ἀνθρώπων (Diog. Laert. 10,117), which should be understood as “harm coming from others”. According to this alternative interpretation, the different means to obtain security can be distinguished. Much security, for instance, is to be gained through laws and justice, which should be understood as a kind of contract aiming at mutual non-interference.¹⁹ But the Epicurean can also reach security through other people, in the first place, of course, through friends (cf. *SV* 34 and 39).²⁰ In the three doctrines quoted above, the security that is reached through political power, fame, and money is ranged under ἀσφάλεια ἐξ ἀνθρώπων as well. The reason for this is clear: political influence, a good reputation or great wealth can contribute to one’s popularity among the people, and will thus lead to greater security.²¹

It is in this perspective that the three doctrines should be interpreted. In *RS* 6, public office and kingship are regarded as a natural good if they provide the security that comes from other people. Similarly, fame is considered a possible means to such security in *RS* 7. Both doctrines

¹⁷ Thus R.D. Hicks in *LCL*, or B. Inwood – L.P. Gerson (1994), 32. M. Schofield (1999), 750 translates “security from men”, but adds that ‘from’ is “plainly defensive”.

¹⁸ See *SV* 31 and 72; cf. fr. 135^a Us. = Stobaeus, *Flor.* 3,17,13 (θαροῶμεν πρὸς αὐτὰ; and *LSJ* s.v. θαροῶ, I.4, with the reference to Plato, *Prt.* 350b). Philodemus uses παρὰ with genitive (*De piet.* col. 75,1–5; *Rhet.* I, 263, col. xxvii, 34–37 S.).

¹⁹ *RS* 31–38; much has been written on Epicurus’ philosophy of law and justice; see esp. R. Philippson (1910); R. Müller (1974) and (1983); V. Goldschmidt (1977) and A. Alberti (1995).

²⁰ It is not necessary in this context to add something more to the rich bibliography on the theme of friendship in Epicurean philosophy. Good recent treatments include P. Mitsis (1987) and (1988); D.K. O’Connor (1989) and R. Müller (1991), 110–129.

²¹ Cf. *SV* 67; Cicero, *fin.* 1,35 (*laudem et caritatem, quae sunt vitae sine metu degendae praesidia firmissima*) and 1,52. According to Plutarch, *Demetr.* 34,2, Epicurus used the means which he had at his disposal to sustain his followers during the siege of Athens by Demetrius.

thus aptly illustrate Epicurus' *philosophy of conditional qualifying*: neither political power nor reputation is good or bad in itself, but they should be pursued if they indeed add to one's security (and thus contribute to one's pleasure). In that sense, both doctrines are merely an application of the rational *calculus* to the domain of politics. This does not imply, however, that these doctrines should be interpreted as advice to strive for power or fame. They offer in the first place a criterion for the evaluation of the great achievements of famous people from the past.²² Such achievements can only be praised to the extent that they indeed contributed to security and pleasure; otherwise they simply fall short of their purpose (cf. *infra*, 2.3.2.1a).

The cases in which political power or fame indeed prove to be successful means to obtain security are, however, rather exceptional. This appears from *RS* 14, where the security which comes from a quiet and sequestered life is preferred to that which comes from other men. It is clear that we are close to the maxim *λάθε βιώσας*. An important implication of *RS* 14 is that the maxim should *not* be connected with *ασφάλεια ἐξ ἀνθρώπων* but with its opposite. This obviously confirms the translation of *ἐξ* as "coming from". Indeed, the opposition between *τῆς ασφαλείας τῆς ἐξ ἀνθρώπων γενομένης* and *ἡ ἐκ (!) τῆς ἡσυχίας καὶ ἐκχωρήσεως τῶν πολλῶν ασφάλεια* makes better sense when *ασφάλεια ἐξ ἀνθρώπων* is understood as the security that can be obtained through other people.

b) Similar to the three foregoing doctrines, *RS* 39 and 40 should be interpreted against the background of the problem of security. The former is about the condition of the man who has made the best arrangements for a situation where the confidence that comes from external things is lacking (*τὸ μὴ θαρροῦν ἀπὸ τῶν ἔξωθεν*). In such cases, the best strategy consists in making akin to oneself the things that one can, while in any case avoiding to make the rest alien to oneself. If this turns out to be impossible, one should avoid all contact.²³ A sequestered life thus appears to be the preferable alternative in situations when nothing remains of the *ασφάλεια ἐξ ἀνθρώπων*, that is, when other people are enemies who menace one's security rather than contributing (or at least not being harmful) to it.

²² Cf. B. Besnier (2001), 154–155.

²³ K. Algra (1997), 147 most interestingly suggests that we have here "an Epicurean equivalent to the conception of concentric circles representing our relative dispositions

RS 40 describes the same situation, though from a different perspective. This time, one's confidence is based on one's neighbours. Here, the Loeb-translation of Hicks ("Those who were best able to provide themselves with the means of security against their neighbours") is particularly misleading. For μάλιστα does not qualify τὴν δύναμιν ἔσχον but ἐκ τῶν ὁμοσούντων, and ἐκ, as usual, does not mean "against" but "coming from". The ideal situation is the one in which one's security is most of all based on one's neighbours (and not on fame, power, or money), for in that case, one can live pleasantly with the strongest guarantee (βεβαιότατον πίστωμα).²⁴ One should note that the term ὁμοσούντων is not without importance, illustrating as it does Epicurus' characteristic focus on a confined circle of acquaintances, rather than on the scene of public life. The same orientation to one's neighbour (ὁ πλησίον) returns in *SV* 67, combined with a negative evaluation of servility to the multitude or to those in power.

c) More difficult is the following passage from the *Sententiae Vaticanae*:

SV 58 Ἐκλυτέον ἑαυτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ περὶ τὰ ἐγκύκλια καὶ πολιτικά δεσμοτηρίου.

"They must free themselves from the prison of daily duties and politics."

The interpretation of this short saying is hindered by two problems. First of all, the meaning of τὰ ἐγκύκλια is not perfectly clear. Bollack interprets the term as the daily worries of private life (based on the opposition between ἐγκύκλια and πολιτικά),²⁵ but the notion of 'private' is not necessarily a connotation of the term ἐγκύκλια,²⁶ and the καὶ may well be explicative. Secondly, ἑαυτοὺς is in the third person plural. According to Bollack, it is used as an alternative to the first person plural (ἡμᾶς αὐτούς; cf. *KG* §455,7), but it is perhaps more likely that we are dealing with an excerpt (e.g. from a letter), given the fact that there

towards our fellow men which is such a prominent feature in the Stoic account of *oikeiōsis* as presented by Hierocles".

²⁴ For the importance of this guarantee for the future, see *SV* 33, 34 and 39; cf. Cicero, *fin.* 1,40.

²⁵ J. Bollack (1975), 522: "À partir de l'opposition qui détache le domaine politique (πολιτικά), on voit que τὰ ἐγκύκλια désigne les occupations quotidiennes de la vie privée". On the other hand, B. Inwood – L.P. Gerson (1994), 39 translate by "general education".

²⁶ See, e.g., Demosthenes 20,21 and Aristotle, *Oec.* 2, 1346a7–8; cf. Epicurus, *Epist. ad Pyth.* 85.

can probably be found other extracts in the same collection as well (*SV* 57 and 61). Presumably, this short phrase was excerpted because of the imagery of the term δεσμοτηρίου. If that is true, we lack the context in which the saying should be understood. There might have followed a qualification, or—perhaps more likely—it should be interpreted as an (indirect) advice for certain persons to free themselves from their daily political occupations. Such advice would be in line with Epicurus' general convictions, but should not be understood as an absolute rule that a priori holds for everyone.

d) In *SV* 81, finally, the problem of security is placed in a broader perspective. Epicurus there quite apodictically states that the disturbance of the soul will not be dissolved by the greatest wealth or respect from the multitude. Even if the previous analysis of other doctrines and sayings has shown that they may (exceptionally) be regarded as good means to bring about security, Epicurus here insists that this security does not entail tranquillity of mind. There may indeed remain all kinds of irrational fears that can trouble the soul's undisturbedness (cf. *RS* 13). In this way, the problem of ἀσφάλεια, and indirectly the maxim λάθε βιώσας, too, are placed in a broader perspective: they are *one of the* means, not *the only* means to reach tranquillity.

e) In conclusion, Epicurus pursues security as a necessary (though not sufficient) condition of his ἀταραξία. In principle, this security can be obtained through other people (ἀσφάλεια ἐξ ἀνθρώπων), for instance by means of political power or reputation. Usually, however, Epicurus prefers a sequestered life, which also brings security (ἀσφάλεια ἐξ ἡσυχίας), even of the purest kind (εἰλικρινεστάτη; *RS* 14), focused on a confined circle of neighbours, and far away from the multitude and political life.

2.3. *The maxim λάθε βιώσας in secondary sources*

2.3.1. *The maxim itself*

Epicurus' advice λάθε βιώσας has come down to us without its direct context. In our sources, it is nevertheless connected with several doctrines of Epicurus. These connections can help us in reconstructing its precise scope and implications. First, however, one should briefly focus

on the maxim itself, as several problems concerning the meaning of the two words themselves have been raised.

a) First of all, the verb λανθάνω is transitive and should thus have an object. Theoretically, there are two possibilities: πάντας (the traditional interpretation) or a reflexive referring to the subject²⁷ (in this case σαυτόν). The latter alternative has been defended by D. Nardoni, who proposes to interpret the maxim as “live while remaining unnoticed by yourself”. This he considers to be tantamount to *vive, securus* or “vivi, indifferente”.²⁸ Such an interpretation, however, is far from unproblematic.

To begin with, the maxim was never understood in this way in Antiquity. Plutarch, for instance, unambiguously prefers the other alternative²⁹—even though his interpretation of λάθε βιώσας may well be biased too. But there are more fundamental objections. Can λάθε βιώσας *überhaupt* have this meaning of “vivi, indifferente”, given the fact that Epicurus often underlines the importance of clarity and of using the words in their common sensical use?³⁰ Is such an interpretation not at odds with the rational *calculus* on which *every* choice and aversion should be based? However, the most important problem of Nardoni’s interpretation is its point of departure. He indeed begins by assuming a radical opposition between the political commitment of some famous Epicureans and the maxim λάθε βιώσας: either these Epicureans have abandoned the orthodox position or the maxim becomes uncertain; *tertium non datur*. In that way, Nardoni adopts a position that is much less nuanced than that of Epicurus himself, who agreed that there are or can be exceptions to the rule. The conclusion can only be that the traditional interpretation of the maxim is the correct one.

b) Recently, C.J. Ruijgh has pointed to another difficulty. In view of the general meaning of the maxim, one might have expected a present imperative (λάνθανε βιών) instead of an aorist.³¹ Ruijgh tries to solve this problem by returning to the view of the ancient grammarians: “D’après l’analyse des grammairiens grecs, l’expression λάθε βιώσας

²⁷ W.W. Goodwin (1965), 353.

²⁸ D. Nardoni (1977).

²⁹ *De lat. viv.* 1128C: εἰ λαθεῖν ἐβούλετο τοὺς ὄντας; cf. 1129 BC.

³⁰ *Epist. ad Her.* 37; 38; 67; 70 and 72; Diog. Laert. 10,31 (= fr. 36 Us.).

³¹ The aorist participle βιώσας is clearly caused by attraction of λάθε, and not *vice versa* (pace J. Borovskij (1994), 179).

visé au moment futur où l'on pourrait constater qu'un homme ἔλαθε βιώσας 'a vécu en cachette'".³² Consequently, the precise meaning of the maxim should be reconstructed as *sic vive ut nemo sentiat te vixisse* (Erasmus).³³ But against this interpretation, too, objections can be raised.

For one could wonder why an Epicurean should take care that he now lives in such a way that later generations will be able to say about him: ἔλαθε βιώσας. This orientation towards the more remote future is clearly at odds with Epicurus' famous doctrine about death, which makes any concern for what people do or do not think about you after death in principle irrelevant (*RS* 2). Epicurus' advice to 'live unnoticed' should contribute to one's security in the present; it concerns contemporaries rather than future generations.

But in which way, then, should Ruijgh's problem be solved? The easiest solution is to return to the old suggestion of H. Usener, according to whom the maxim should be traced back to one of Epicurus' letters.³⁴ This interpretation explains the aorist imperative, since the advice is then directed to only one person. No doubt many other Epicureans might follow this personal advice as well, but then one cannot make it an absolute rule.

Even if the advice was not given in a personal letter, a parallel case such as γνῶθι σαυτόν, which was written on the temple of Apollo at Delphi and was thus meant for everyone, shows that the aorist imperative need not be problematic. The exhortation to 'know oneself' can be regarded as advice that is directed to every individual person. Every visitor of the Delphic shrine may understand that he is personally addressed by the god.³⁵ Similarly, λάθε βιώσας can be regarded as an appeal to every individual. One should note that such an individual appeal fits in very well with the personal approach that was characteristic of Epicurus' *Seelenheilung*.³⁶

c) This context of *Seelenheilung* also helps to explain the extreme brevity of the maxim. Indeed, such concise maxims have the considerable ped-

³² C.J. Ruijgh (2000), 327.

³³ C.J. Ruijgh (2000), 328 and 347; cf. also the translation of C. Diano (1967), 182: "Vis de façon que personne ne s'aperçoive que tu as été au monde".

³⁴ H. Usener (1881), LXIII–LXIV and 326; cf. H. Steckel (1968), 592.

³⁵ Cf. Plutarch, *De E* 392A: ὁ μὲν γὰρ θεὸς ἕκαστον ἡμῶν ἐνταῦθα προσιώντα οἶον ἀπαζόμενος προσαγορεύει τὸ γνῶθι σαυτόν; cf. also Plato, *Chrm.* 164de.

³⁶ M. Nussbaum (1986), 41–43.

agogical advantage of easily taking root in the mind of the student. Moreover, they possess a certain rhetorical power which directly strikes the hearer.³⁷ In this particular case, the maxim *λάθε βιώσας* becomes even more effective because of its complex relation to earlier thinking. Indeed, it formally refers to traditional gnomic phrases such as *μηδὲν ἄγαν* or *γνώθι σαυτόν*.³⁸ This formal continuity, however, is combined with a much more radical discontinuity with regard to content.³⁹ In a traditional and commonly shared perspective, it is the criminal who wishes to hide himself, whereas the just person has no need to do so. Epicurus adopts exactly the opposite position: his advice is not addressed to the criminal, who can never be sure of remaining unnoticed (*RS* 35 = *SV* 6; fr. 532 Us. = Plutarch, *Non posse* 1090CD and Seneca, *epist.* 97,13), but to the good person. Such a radical departure from traditional opinions—while retaining their formal phrasing—was no doubt highly offensive and provocative, but also added even more to the efficiency of the maxim, as it throws the Epicurean back upon the circle that best supported his arduous process of *Seelenheilung*, that is, the company of like-minded friends.

2.3.2. *The maxim in its broader context*

2.3.2.1. Although the secondary sources have transmitted the phrase *λάθε βιώσας* without any context, in some of them the maxim is connected with other doctrines of Epicurus. Such connections provide interesting information about the way in which the maxim was understood in Antiquity and hence about the meaning and scope it could have had. Themistius associates the maxim with Epicurus' doctrine that man is not by nature a social being (*or.* 26, 324a). The latter doctrine is attested in other sources as well,⁴⁰ and was defended by Epicurus in all its radicalness: he even denied that parental love for children should be regarded as natural,⁴¹ a doctrine which provoked the indignant reaction

³⁷ Cf. Seneca, *epist.* 94,27–28 and 43; I. Hadot (1969), 16–17.

³⁸ K. Freeman (1938), 162.

³⁹ Epicurus more than once adopts traditional material while reformulating it in a more elegant and pointed way; e.g. *RS* 17; *SV* 9 and 68; D. Clay (1972) and (1983a), 77–78. Sometimes, traditional thinking is given a completely new turn (see e.g. the remarks of T. Gargiulo (1982) on fr. 409 Us. = Athenaeus, 12,546f).

⁴⁰ See, e.g., fr. 523, 540, 580 and 581 Us.; on Epictetus, 1,23,1 (= fr. 525 Us.), see R. Müller (1974), 37 and J.M. Rist (1980), 123, n. 17.

⁴¹ See, e.g., Epictetus, 1,23,3–10 (= fr. 525 Us.); Plutarch, *De am. prol.* 495A (= fr. 527

of Plutarch.⁴² Now the close connection between the maxim λάθε βιώσας and Epicurus' view of human beings should be understood against the background of Themistius' own Aristotelianism. In such an Aristotelian perspective, the social nature of human beings directly implies political commitment (Themistius was himself politically active). In that sense, the association of λάθε βιώσας with the opposite view of man shows that Themistius' interpretation of the maxim has especially political implications, and that he connects Epicurus' advice to 'live unnoticed' primarily with his tenet of μὴ πολιτεύεσθαι.

a) Many secondary sources tell us that Epicurus strongly advised against participation in politics. Often, they offer this information apodictically and without any nuance, in a way that disqualifies them as reliable sources for Epicurus' exact position. Such passages frequently contain polemical misrepresentations or doxographical generalisations, and tell us more about the presuppositions of their authors, who usually belonged to the aristocratic upper-class and were themselves engaged in politics, than about the view of Epicurus. At best, they contain a half-truth, which amounts to a whole lie.

Epicurus would not merely have dissuaded someone from participation in political life, but he would have also adopted a very critical attitude towards statesmen and legislators of the present and the past. According to Plutarch, he "mentioned politicians merely to jeer at them and belittle their fame" (*Adv. Colot.* 1127A; cf. frs. 558–560 Us.; Cicero, *rep.* 1,1 and 1,3). Such a conclusion, however, is highly biased and conditioned by Plutarch's polemical aims. Epicurus' position towards politicians probably comprised two components. As has already appeared from *RS* 6 (cf. *supra*, 2.2.2a), politicians can be praised to the extent that their efforts indeed contribute to their own security and pleasure. Torquatus elaborates the same argument in the first book of Cicero's *De finibus*: the heroic accomplishments of the famous politicians of the past should not be ascribed to their love for virtue, but instead provide evidence of their sound insight into their own personal advantage and their capacity to apply a rational *calculus* of pleasure and pain (1,34–36).

Us.); *Adv. Colot.* 1123A and Cicero, *Att.* 7,2,4 (= fr. 528 Us.); cf. also Plutarch, *Non posse* 1100D.

⁴² That Plutarch's *De amore proliis* should be interpreted as an anti-Epicurean polemic was shown by A. Barigazzi (1994); cf. also the more detailed analysis of G. Roskam (forthcoming).

Other politicians (or the same in other contexts?) were indeed ridiculed by Epicurus for enduring pains that contributed nothing at all to their pleasure. This negative component is important in the context of Epicurus' *Seelenheilung*, as it neutralizes the possible attractivity which traditional examples can have for an Epicurean student. One should not bother about such famous examples, which are not worthy of imitation, but instead try to emulate the example of those who base their decisions on Epicurean principles. New examples take the place of traditional ones: be a second Epicurus rather than a second Alexander.⁴³ In that sense, even the second, negative component of Epicurus' position towards politicians also has a positive aspect. This is completely omitted by Plutarch, who confines himself to those aspects that serve his polemical attack against Colotes.⁴⁴ In this case too, the conclusions that he bases on his polemical half-truth turn out to be little more than a complete lie.

b) Some sources do not merely refer to Epicurus' doctrine of μὴ πολιτεύεσθαι, but also mention his arguments. In Plutarch's *Life of Pyrrhus*, for instance, the argument is given that Epicurus avoided politics as harming and ruining blessedness (ὥς βλάβην καὶ σύγχυσιν τοῦ μακαρίου; 20,3 = fr. 552 Us.). According to Diogenes Laertius (10,117 = fr. 536 Us.; cf. Cicero, *fin.* 1,67; Seneca, *epist.* 14,10 and 105, 1–4), such βλάβαι ἐξ ἀνθρώπων (here as well: *coming from* other people) are the result of either hatred (μῖσος), envy (φθόνος), or contempt (καταφρόνησις). In the domain of politics, one could in the first place think of envy (cf. Philodemus, *Rhet.* II, 158, fr. XIX, 6–14 S. = fr. 552 Us.). In any case, it is clear that in this perspective, λάθε βιώσας should not be interpreted as an attempt to obtain ἀσφάλεια ἐξ ἀνθρώπων, but as an attempt to avoid βλάβαι ἐξ ἀνθρώπων. This confirms and completes the conclusions reached thus far. Furthermore, as Cicero tells us, since Epicurus gave precepts in order to avoid hatred and envy (*fin.* 2,84 = fr. 538 Us.), the maxim can easily be interpreted as one of these.

In other sources, Epicurus' position towards politics is connected with the importance of limitation. Indeed, it is on such a limitation, rather than on political power and offices, that happiness is based (Plutarch, *De aud. poet.* 37A = fr. 548 Us.), and a man who does not

⁴³ Cf. V. Buchheit (1971); on Alexander as a negative example, see also J. Salem (1989), 65–70.

⁴⁴ See also G. Roskam (2005b), 358–359.

understand this will never be happy, “even if he is master of the whole world” (Seneca, *epist.* 9,20 = fr. 474 Us.; cf. Cicero, *fin.* 1,51 and 1,59). Again, the politician turns out to pursue desires which are neither natural nor necessary and which make him depend upon the future. In that sense, λάθῃ βιώσας can also be interpreted as an attempt to avoid the tyranny of time (cf. Stobaeus, *Flor.* 3,16,29 = fr. 204 Us. and Cicero, *fin.* 1,60)⁴⁵ and the dependence upon other people (*SV* 67), in order to reach the true freedom that is based on self-sufficiency (*SV* 77; cf. Philodemus, *Πραγματεῖαι*, col. xxxii, 5–8 = fr. 196 Us.).

Different arguments against participation in politics are proposed at the outset of Cicero’s *Republic*. First of all, politics entails arduous efforts (*labores*) and can even involve peril to the politician’s life (1,4). Secondly, one could easily recall the misfortune of many famous statesmen, who were often wronged by their own people (as was the case, e.g., with Miltiades and Themistocles; 1,4–5). Again, the traditional examples are neutralised: the great heroes of the past may have reached a great reputation, to be sure, but were nonetheless unhappy. Finally, most politicians are unworthy fellows whose company is better avoided, as it might damage one’s own reputation and as it can lead to dangerous conflicts, certainly if the base mob is involved (1,9). This argument is derived from actual political praxis, which is far from rosy. The emphasis on the harsh reality of political life can be understood as an *antidotum* against some of the great traditional ideals that urged one on to participation in public life. State and law are demythologised as the work of man,⁴⁶ who is not himself a social being by nature (*supra*, 2,3,2,1). Even τὸ καλόν, the ideal par excellence of the true politician,⁴⁷ is only an empty name (fr. 511 Us. = Cicero, *Tusc.* 5,73; 5,119 etc.) which needs reinterpretation and redefinition in order to be meaningful in an Epicurean perspective.⁴⁸

Finally, Plutarch refers to Epicurus and his followers as to those who say that the crown of an untroubled condition is incomparable to great leadership (τὸν τῆς ἀταραξίας στέφανον ἀσύμβλητον εἶναι ταῖς μεγάλαις ἡγεμονίαις; *Adv. Colot.* 1125C = fr. 556 Us.). This is an interesting frag-

⁴⁵ Cf. D. Puliga (1983), 257.

⁴⁶ R. Müller (1988), 124.

⁴⁷ Aristotle, *EE* 1, 1216a23–27; cf. later Plutarch, *An seni* 786D and *Praec. ger. reip.* 799A; G. Roskam (2004/5).

⁴⁸ Cf. also Cicero, *fin.* 2,48 and Epictetus, 2,22,21 = fr. 513 Us. Such reinterpretations can be found in Seneca, *epist.* 2,6 (= fr. 475 Us.) and in *Epist. ad Men.* 132; *RS* 5 = *SV* 5; on the latter passages see A. Long (1986), 302–304.

ment in that it introduces a positive alternative. There appears to be an ideal that is far superior to the advantages that can be obtained through politics,⁴⁹ and which can also be expressed by more positive terms such as ἡσυχία, σχολή and ῥαστώνη, or *otium*, *quies* and *tranquillitas* (fr. 426 Us.). Furthermore, this fragment illustrates once again one of the ways in which Epicurus tries to neutralise traditional and popular morality. Even if striving for crowns normally falls within the category of desires that are neither natural nor necessary (cf. scholion on *RS* 29), the pursuit of a symbolic crown of ἀταραξία can of course be recommended in an Epicurean perspective. Traditional opinions about what is worthy of being pursued are given an interesting turn. Epicurus replaces common ideals by a positive alternative that yields much better results.

c) These theoretical arguments should suffice to keep the followers of Epicurus in their Garden. But Epicurus also tried to persuade politicians who had entered public life to withdraw from it again (cf. Cicero, *rep.* 1,3: *ut eos etiam revocent qui iam processerint*). One could assume, of course, that he used basically the same arguments. Yet, the scanty fragments that remain from his correspondence give a somewhat different picture, by showing that Epicurus' arguments are more concrete and adapted to the individual nature of his addressee.

Important in this respect are two fragments from a letter to Idomeneus, both preserved in Seneca.⁵⁰ In the first one (*epist.* 22,5–6 = fr. 133 Us.), Epicurus advises Idomeneus to flee as fast as he can, before he loses the freedom to withdraw, but he immediately adds that he should wait for the καιρός. It is clear that this fragment is best understood against the background of Epicurus' negative attitude towards participation in politics. Quite remarkably, however, it does not offer theoretical arguments *why* Idomeneus should abandon public life, but prac-

⁴⁹ Cf. the more general perspective of fr. 457 Us. (= Porphyry, *Ad Marc.* 31, 294,5–7 Nauck).

⁵⁰ A third fragment is only indirectly relevant. According to Plutarch (*Adv. Colot.* 1127D = fr. 134 Us.), Epicurus advised Idomeneus “not to live as a slave of νόμοι and δόξαι, as long as they refrain from making trouble through a blow administered by his neighbour”. I completely agree with R. Westman (1955), 189–192 that νόμοι should here not be interpreted as ‘laws’ (which is suggested by Plutarch), but rather as ‘customs’, and that δόξαι refer to the ‘opinions’ of other people. The fragment thus deals with the problem of security, or more precisely with the avoidance of βλάβαι ἐξ ἀνθρώπων.

tical advice as to *how* he should do this. This illustrates an important aspect of Epicurus' *Seelenheilung*: he does not confine himself to abstract theoretical advice, but also adds concrete instruction regarding how Idomeneus should act. At the same time, however, his concrete directions remain sufficiently general to avoid too pedantic of an approach: the final judgement of what will be the right moment remains entirely the task of Idomeneus himself. In passing, one can finally note that Epicurus' practical instruction again qualifies his negative position regarding participation in public life: Idomeneus should not take impulsive or hasty decisions; if he indeed abandons politics, it should be in a rational and well-considered way.

The second passage, which probably offers a literal quotation, deserves to be fully quoted:

epist. 21,3 = fr. 132 Us. *Si gloria tangeris, notiores te epistulae meae facient quam omnia ista, quae colis et propter quae coleris.*

"If you are attracted by fame, my letters will make you more renowned than all the things which you cherish and which make you cherished."
(transl. R.M. Gummere)

This is Epicurean *Seelenheilung* at its best. First of all, the statement presupposes a theoretical argumentation that is not, however, made explicit. Epicurus here prefers to come straight to the point. At the same time, he takes into account the individual nature of his addressee. Realising that he is not talking to an Epicurean sage but to someone who may still be attracted by vain desires, he shows that even these desires can better be fulfilled in his perspective. In that way, Epicurus in this fragment appears as a true friend in the most Epicurean sense of the word. He frees Idomeneus from unnecessary troubles and offers in one letter more than his friend could hope to reach in the rest of his life. No wonder Epicurus could count his friends by whole cities (Diog. Laert. 10,9).

d) Up to this point, the discussion of the secondary sources on Epicurus' political philosophy focused on Epicurus' advice not to participate in politics and his arguments in favour of non-participation. However, it is also necessary to provide some important qualifications.

First of all, Epicurus' dissuasion from engaging in politics does not imply that one should completely ignore the πόλις and its institutions. The Garden is not situated somewhere in the uninhabited wilderness, as Plutarch, polemical as ever, suggests (*Adv. Colot.* 1115A), but on the

outskirts of the town,⁵¹ and the laws and institutions of the city can be important for the Epicurean philosopher, who can, for instance, serve as a juror (Diog. Laert. 10,120 = fr. 576 Us.). Moreover, as has been demonstrated convincingly, Epicurus himself took into account the legislation of Athens while making his testament.⁵²

Secondly, Epicurus' preference for an 'unnoticed life' does not exclude all interest in political life. His close contacts with influential politicians such as Idomeneus and Mithres are well known, and the fact that he was well informed about the presence of the Stoics Persaeus and Philonides at the court of Antigonos (Diog. Laert. 7,9 = fr. 119 Us.) proves that he attentively followed the course of political events.⁵³

Most importantly, as could be expected on the basis of the hedonistic *calculus*, Epicurus agreed that there could be exceptional cases in which one should engage in politics. This means that, in a political context at least, λάθε βιώσας is not *a priori* a rule for everybody.⁵⁴ Epicurus' doctrine on this point was aptly summarised by Seneca: *non accedet ad rem publicam sapiens, nisi si quid intervenerit* (dial. 8,3,2 = fr. 9 Us.). This famous formulation is rather general, of course, and is to an important extent conditioned by its Stoic counterpart (*accedet ad rem publicam, nisi si quid impeditur*; *ibid.* = SVF 1,271). Nevertheless, similar expressions can be found in Cicero (*rep.* 1,10 and 1,11) and Plutarch (*Adv. Colot.* 1125C = fr. 554 Us.: λέγειν δεῖ πῶς ἄριστα τὸ τῆς φύσεως τέλος συντηρήσει καὶ πῶς τις ἐκὼν εἶναι μὴ πρόσεισιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐπὶ τὰς τῶν πλεθῶν ἀρχάς). One should note that the latter passage, which according to Plutarch is a verbatim quotation, offers one more beautiful illustration of Epicurus' qualifying philosophy. Both the positive and negative poles are qualified in this case: the term ἄριστα leaves open the possibility that politics is *a* way to the final end of nature (though not the *best* way), and the restriction ἐκὼν makes perfectly clear that there can be exceptions to the general rule.

⁵¹ R.E. Wycherley (1959) and M.L. Clarke (1973). Cf. also A. Long (1986), 316, according to whom the location of the Garden "symbolizes the relation of Epicurus to his own society [...]—just outside the formal boundary, but sufficiently close to have contact and influence".

⁵² M. Leiwu – P. Remes (1999).

⁵³ Cf. H. Steckel (1968), 591–592 and M.L. Silvestre (1995). Epicurus also wrote letters Πρὸς τοὺς μεγάλους (fr. 104 Us. = Philodemus, *De piet.* col. 37,23–25), but unfortunately nothing is known about their content.

⁵⁴ Pace K. Freeman (1938), 162.

The Epicurean philosopher, then, can enter political life *si quid inter-veniret*. Is it possible to be more concrete than this? Fowler thinks of extreme political circumstances that require political action in order to, for example, protect an Epicurean community from destruction⁵⁵ or kill a tyrant.⁵⁶ Griffin thinks that a breakdown of true justice may motivate the Epicurean to enter political life.⁵⁷ Besnier argues that Epicureans will engage in politics when circumstances require changing the laws⁵⁸ (cf. *RS* 37 and 38) and Asmis more generally believes that they intervene in politics in order to help preserve the political stability they need for their personal happiness.⁵⁹ Even though such motivations are not at odds with Epicurus' thinking, it is probably not a coincidence that they never appear in our sources. Epicurus himself never faced such a problem, as the laws of the πόλεις of his day offered more than sufficient security to anyone who preferred to lead a sequestered life. Moreover, the circumstances that would force an Epicurean to be politically active should be particularly extreme, for even if a law proves to be bad, an application of the hedonistic *calculus* will show that it usually entails much less trouble to live under bad laws than to try to change them.⁶⁰ In short, it is rather unlikely that the proviso *nisi si quid inter-veniret* refers in the first place to extreme political circumstances and emergency actions.

On the basis of a passage from Plutarch's *Life of Brutus*,⁶¹ D. Sedley⁶² suggested that later Epicureans such as Cassius could defend the view that the Epicurean sage can on special occasions be driven 'by an over-

⁵⁵ D.P. Fowler (1989), 127.

⁵⁶ D.P. Fowler (1989), 128.

⁵⁷ M. Griffin (1989), 30; cf. also 33.

⁵⁸ B. Besnier (2001), 148. Cf. also K. Bringmann in A. Long (1986), 321–322.

⁵⁹ E. Asmis (2001), 118.

⁶⁰ Cf. W.J. Earle (1988), 101; cf. also *infra* 4.2.4a on Philodemus, *Rhet.* I, 259, col. xxiv, 33–39 S.

⁶¹ *Brut.* 12,3: ἐπεὶ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐταίρων ὁ Βροῦτος Στατύλλιον τε παρέλιπε τὸν Ἐπικούρειον καὶ Φαώνιον ἐραστήν Κάτωνος, ὅτι πόρρωθεν αὐτοῖς τοιαύτην τινὰ κύκλω προσβαλόντος ἐν τῷ διαλέγεσθαι καὶ συμφιλοσοφεῖν πείραν, ὁ μὲν Φαώνιος ἀπεκρίνατο χεῖρον εἶναι μοναρχίας παρανόμου πόλεμον ἐμφύλιον, ὁ δὲ Στατύλλιος ἔφη τῷ σοφῷ καὶ νοῦν ἔχοντι διὰ φαύλους καὶ ἀνοήτους κινδυνεύειν καὶ ταράττεσθαι μὴ καθήκειν (“Besides, Brutus also passed by, among his other friends, Statilius the Epicurean and Favonius the devoted follower of Cato. The reason was that some time before he had put them to a very similar test by the round-about method of a philosophical discussion, when Favonius had answered that civil war was worse than illegal monarchy; and Statilius had declared that it did not become a wise and sensible man to be thrown into turmoil and peril for the sake of feeble and foolish folk.”; transl. B. Perrin).

⁶² (1997), 46–47.

riding sense of obligation to their non-philosophical fellow-citizens'. Now Sedley is perfectly right in his contention that such a motivation is not necessarily opposed to the hedonistic *calculus*, since the moral satisfaction that such an exceptional decision entails brings 'a sufficiently great pleasure to counterbalance the pain brought on by political anxieties'. To the extent, however, that his suggestion presupposes the motivating force of political emergency situations, it is open to the same objections as that of Fowler, Griffin, Besnier, and Asmis. Furthermore, even if Sedley is right, this understanding of *si quid intervenerit* only applies to later generations, not to Epicurus himself. I am doubtful, however, whether it could be attributed even to later Epicureans. Sedley himself admits that the evidence for his suggestion is 'scanty at best'.⁶³ It is not surprising that Statilius the Epicurean rejects such a motivation, and it is important to note that no parallels can be found in other contemporary Epicureans such as Philodemus. I regard it as much more likely that Brutus posed his philosophical problem in very general terms, which were not directly connected with a specific Epicurean point of view (cf. the term *καθήκειν*), because they were addressed to *all* participants in the dialectical process (cf. *συμφιλοσοφεῖν*). Statilius then merely provided his own answer in line with the orthodox Epicurean doctrine of abstention from political participation.⁶⁴

There are only two passages in the sources that provide additional information. The first one is again to be found in Plutarch:

οὐδ' Ἐπίκουρος οἶεται δεῖν ἡσυχάζειν, ἀλλὰ τῇ φύσει χρῆσθαι πολιτευομένους καὶ πράσσοντας τὰ κοινὰ τοὺς φιλοτίμους καὶ φιλοδόξους, ὥς μᾶλλον ὑπ' ἀπραγμοσύνης ταράττεσθαι καὶ κακοῦσθαι πεφνυκότας, ἢ ὧν ὀρέγονται μὴ τυγχάνωσιν. (*De tranq. an.* 465F–466A = fr. 555 Us.)

"Not even Epicurus believes that men who are eager for honour and glory should lead an inactive life, but that they should fulfil their natures by engaging in politics and entering public life, on the ground that, because of their natural dispositions, they are more likely to be disturbed and harmed by inactivity if they do not obtain what they desire." (transl. W.C. Helmbold)

This doctrine is given in the context of a polemical attack on Democritus,⁶⁵ which explains why Plutarch uniquely presents the nuances of Epicurus' position. Indeed, the Epicurean doctrine is not given for its

⁶³ (1997), 47.

⁶⁴ Cf. also M. Griffin (1989), 29.

⁶⁵ See A. Barigazzi (1962) and G. Roskam (2005b), 362–363.

own sake, nor is it approved by Plutarch (466A), but it merely functions as an *a fortiori*-argument that further isolates Democritus.⁶⁶

Nonetheless, Plutarch at first sight offers interesting information about the kind of exceptions Epicurus had in mind. In this case, the motivation to participate in public life is not an external political situation but one's own nature: a man should engage in politics if he is eager for honour and fame, as in this case, inactivity would prevent him from fulfilling his desires and thus throw him into confusion.⁶⁷ It is clear that his decision is a mere consequence of the hedonistic *calculus*. An important key to a correct understanding of this fragment concerns Epicurus' doctrine that all desires which bring no pain if they remain unfulfilled, are not necessary (*RS* 26). But in the case of the φιλότιμοι and φιλόδοξοι of this fragment, the fact that the desires remain unfulfilled does lead to pain. In such a case, the desire to enter political life could presumably be regarded as a necessary desire. If that is indeed true, this implies that the general distinction between different desires cannot be concretised without qualification, and thus that the scholion on *RS* 29 is too apodictic. Desires may be unnecessary for the great majority, but *de facto* necessary for a small minority.

There is, however, something more to be said about this complex passage, which may question the conclusions obtained thus far. The fact that Plutarch has preserved the nuances of Epicurus' position need not imply that his presentation is completely unbiased. First of all, we do not know in which context Epicurus proposed this argument—one may merely interpret it as a hypothetical concession, which he regarded as irrelevant for normal people.⁶⁸ More importantly, Plutarch may well have omitted other restrictions or qualifications which did not suit his polemical purpose. It is unlikely that Epicurus would have advised all his ambitious students to enter into political life. The fragments of his letter to Idomeneus rather show that he merely adapted his therapeutic arguments to their nature, while maintaining his advise to withdraw (cf. *supra* 2.3.2.1c). Who, then, are these φιλότιμοι and φιλόδοξοι who should engage in politics? Are they Epicurean students with particularly recalcitrant natures (cf. Seneca, *epist.* 52,4 = fr. 192 Us.)? But even these can be forced, as it were, into virtue (*ibid.*). Are

⁶⁶ G. Roskam (2005b), 363.

⁶⁷ See also the parallel passage in Lactantius, *inst.* 3,17,6 (= fr. 557 Us.), with A. Grilli (1996).

⁶⁸ D.P. Fowler (1989), 127.

they other people who did not belong to Epicurus' school? But they appear to be able to correctly apply the hedonistic *calculus*. Perhaps Plutarch vaguely alludes to the typically Epicurean evaluation of the great statesmen of the past, who can be praised if their achievements were the result of a rational *calculus* of benefits (*supra* 2.3.2.1a), and adapts this argument in order to make it fit better his own polemical thesis, brought forward against Democritus, that inactivity itself for some people often leads to discontent (465E). If that is indeed true, Plutarch's presentation is misleading to the extent that it replaces the basically descriptive perspective of Epicurus by a normative one (cf. *πρωτοεπόμενος* in 466A).⁶⁹ The implication of this conclusion is that the passage is to a certain extent disqualified as a reliable source for the concrete meaning of Seneca's general phrase *nisi si quid intervenerit*.

There is, however, a second fragment that may clarify Seneca's words. According to Diogenes Laertius, the Epicurean sage will pay court to a king when the occasion is appropriate (10,120 = fr. 577 Us.: *μόναρχον ἐν καιρῷ θεραπεύσειν*). Since this short tenet has been interpreted in various ways, there is the danger of explaining *obscurum per obscurius*. Gigante and Dorandi argue that Epicurus favours monarchy as the best political constitution (as it is the one that can best be reconciled with his political advice *λάθε βιώσας*) and that the Epicurean sage can earn money by advising kings.⁷⁰ Their interpretation, which connects the fragments 577 and 567 Us. (= Diog. Laert. 10,120), is weakened by the unnecessary emendation *εὐπορήσαντα* instead of *ἀπορήσαντα*. The interpretation proposed by Fowler is more nuanced. While agreeing with Gigante and Dorandi that Epicurus had a certain preference for monarchy, he underlines, correctly to my mind, that this only holds for the non-ideal circumstances of political reality. If everyone was an Epicurean, there would be no need of kings (or laws), but as things are, "monarchy might be the easiest system to live with, and if circumstances required action—the second concession—it might well be right *μόναρχον ἐν καιρῷ θεραπεύειν*".⁷¹

The question remains, however, whether so much emphasis should be put on the term *μόναρχον*. Schofield rightly insists that there is no good evidence that Epicurus expressed his opinion on the comparative

⁶⁹ Cf. A. Grilli (1996), 381.

⁷⁰ M. Gigante – T. Dorandi (1980).

⁷¹ D.P. Fowler (1989), 130.

merits of the different constitutions.⁷² Perhaps the question was of no great importance to him. In any case, the sage will pay court to influential statesmen (such as Idomeneus or Mithres) no less than to kings. Accordingly, the interpretation of the scope and meaning of the doctrine should not rest primarily on the term *μόναρχον*, but rather on *ἐν καὶρῳ*.

It is not easy, however, to make this fairly general expression *ἐν καὶρῳ* more concrete. Under which circumstances should the Epicurean philosopher pay court to a king or another powerful politician? There is a concrete example that may be helpful here, namely, Epicurus' own decision to approach the king (after he had been slandered by Timocrates; cf. Plutarch, *Adv. Colot.* 1126C) by means of some followers. This shows that Diogenes' *ἐν καὶρῳ* need not refer to extreme emergency situations that affect the whole state. They rather refer to particular contingencies that are important for an individual Epicurean or for his community.

This conclusion probably holds for any kind of political commitment on the part of the Epicurean philosopher. One may add that, in such cases, the Epicurean's short participation in politics can contribute to his pleasure, not only in the long term (when he has succeeded in reaching his political goal), but even during his commitment itself. This can be inferred from *Epist. ad Men.* 131, where Epicurus argues that habituation to a simple way of living places man in a better condition for moments of extravagance.⁷³ If one applies this argument to the domain of politics, one could conclude that an Epicurean can better enjoy occasional moments of political activity if he is normally habituated to a sequestered life. This helps to explain the great enthusiasm at Metrodorus' successful attempt to free Mithres from prison—another example of a particular *καὶρός* that is primarily relevant for the Epicureans themselves, rather than for the whole state. Plutarch twice refers to Epicurus' glorification of Metrodorus' success in very sarcastic terms (*Non posse* 1097B and *Adv. Colot.* 1126EF = fr. 194 Us.). Such polemical reactions can be understood from the perspective of the author who wrote the *Lives* of so many important statesmen. But this does not alter the fact that the pleasures which Metrodorus enjoyed at that occasion and which he shared with his friends were genuine and

⁷² M. Schofield (1999), 743–744.

⁷³ Cf. also Seneca, *epist.* 18,9 (= fr. 158 Us.), with the interpretation of I. Avotins (1977).

intense. This confrontation of Plutarch and Metrodorus merely shows that both thinkers belonged to two different worlds, which were separated by a gap that perhaps made any further discussion useless in advance.

2.3.2.2. The previous analyses have shown that the maxim λάθε βιώσας had an important political aspect. Its relevance, however, extends to other domains as well. According to Plutarch (*De tuenda* 135CD = fr. 8 Us.), Epicurus and his followers avoided “every activity that implied ambition” (πάσης φιλοτιμίαν ἐχούσης πράξεως). As was the case with Themistius’ interpretation of the maxim discussed earlier (*supra*, 2.3.2.1), one should note that this presentation of Epicurus’ views should primarily be understood against Plutarch’s own philosophical background, since it is Plutarch who is preoccupied with the problem of φιλοτιμία.⁷⁴ In Epicurus’ extant works, the term φιλοτιμία never appears. He rather uses terms such as δοξοκοπία (fr. 120 Us.) and ἔνδοξος or περιβλεπτος (*RS* 7; cf. *SV* 81 and fr. [21.4] ²Arr.). Nevertheless, the question remains whether the maxim λάθε βιώσας can be understood as a piece of advice to abandon all striving for honour. As usual, Epicurus’ position proves to be more nuanced.

a) In general, Epicurus agrees that fame can lead to some pleasures at least (τινας ἡδονάς; Plutarch, *Non posse* 1099F–1100A = fr. 549 Us.; cf. also the parallel position on a bad reputation in fr. 550 Us.) and that it can contribute to one’s security (Cicero, *fin.* 1,34–35 and 52–53; cf. *RS* 7). On the other hand, he denies that it can cure disturbance of the soul (*SV* 81) and adds that it can sometimes even offer more pain than pleasure (Cicero, *Tusc.* 5,103 = fr. 586 Us.). On this point as well, Epicurus avoided apodictic and generalising conclusions, although it is safe to say that in general, he was rather negative about actively striving for great fame. This, in any case, appears from two further fragments.

According to Diogenes Laertius (10,120 = fr. 573 Us.), the Epicurean sage will work towards a good reputation, but only insofar as not to be condemned. This restriction has a double purpose: security and limitation. The Epicurean should avoid being condemned because contempt can lead to βλάβαι ἐξ ἀνθρώπων (Diog. Laert. 10,117 = fr. 536 Us.). In that sense, the restriction derives its *raison d’être* from Epicurus’ concern

⁷⁴ See, e.g., F. Frazier (1988) and C. Pelling (1989), 208–213.

for security. At the same time, it introduces considerable limitations, as it practically rules out all active striving for great fame. In this light, Plutarch's claim that Epicurus was himself eager for renown (*Non posse* 1100A–C and *De lat. viv.* 1128BC) appears as a polemical and malicious misrepresentation.

This conclusion is confirmed by one of the *Vatican Sayings*, which deserves to be quoted in full:

SV 64 Ἀκολουθεῖν δεῖ τὸν παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων ἔπαινον αὐτόματον, ἡμᾶς δὲ γενέσθαι περὶ τὴν ἡμῶν ἰατρειάν.

“Praise from other men must come of its own accord; but we must be concerned with healing ourselves.” (transl. B. Inwood – L.P. Gerson, slightly modified)

In this passage, Epicurus places the problem of striving for a good reputation in its right perspective. What really matters is *not* pleasing the multitude (fr. 187 Us.; cf. also fr. 209 and 489 Us.), but—once again—the process of *Seelenheilung*. In such a context, Epicurus prefers personal conversation to contacts with the multitude, as appears from a fragment of one of his letters: *haec ego non multis, sed tibi; satis enim magnum alteri theatrum sumus* (Seneca, *epist.* 7,11 = fr. 208 Us.).

However, what if such praise indeed follows of its own accord? This fragment suggests that the Epicurean will gratefully accept the honours that are given to him. Cicero, on the other hand, argues that the sage will spurn even the honours that the people offer him without his seeking them (*Tusc.* 5,104 = fr. 586 Us.). Now Cicero's claim is reliable only if *λάθε βιώσας* is to be understood as absolute advice, which it is not. A rational *calculus* will show that it may often entail much more trouble to reject an honour of the people than to accept it (cf. Plutarch, *Praec. ger. reip.* 820CD). The first thing to note, however, is that, as a direct result of their sequestered life, the great majority of Epicureans will never have to face this problem. In that sense, the question whether or not an Epicurean sage will accept unsolicited honours proves to be nearly as imaginary as the question whether he will commit injustice if he knows that he will never be found out, and thus will probably receive the same technical answer: unqualified prediction is not free from difficulty (Plutarch, *Adv. Colot.* 1127D = fr. 18 Us.).

b) Epicurus' position with regard to striving for honour is not only important in a political context, but is also relevant to the closely related domain of rhetoric. Persuasive speech was of paramount impor-

tance in Greek political tradition,⁷⁵ to be sure, and the influence of famous statesmen often rested considerably on their rhetorical powers (cf. Plutarch, *Praec. ger. reip.* 802C). Even outside of a strictly political context, talented speakers could strive for renown. They could, for instance, try to gain the favour of their audience by brilliant epideictic orations. Perhaps, Epicurus somehow distinguished these two different contexts in which rhetoric was used. This, at least, appears from Philodemus, who attempts to demonstrate in his *Rhetoric* that Epicurus distinguished between a sophistic, epideictic rhetoric that should be regarded as an art, and a more practical rhetoric that is important in politics but should not be considered an art. This clear-cut distinction completely disappears in the doxographic perspective of Diogenes Laertius, who confines himself to the short tenet οὐ ῥητορεύσειν καλῶς (10,118 = fr. 565 Us.). This should no doubt in the first place be connected with the epideictic branch of rhetoric (cf. also the tenet οὐ πανηγυρεῖν; Diog. Laert. 10,120 = fr. 566 Us.), even if the more practical, political one should perhaps not completely be excluded, given the traditional—though un-Epicurean—political connotations of the term καλός. However that may be, this general and apodictic rejection of making rhetorical speeches is somehow qualified in different contexts.

First of all, the Epicurean sage is allowed to give public readings, though not of his own free will (οὐχ ἐκόντα; Diog. Laert. 10,120 = fr. 564 Us.). The qualifying restriction οὐχ ἐκόντα is not further explained, but presumably implies that the readings concerned are given to a larger audience outside the school. Hicks' translation "only by request" is misleading in that it obscures the aspect of necessity or of being forced. The restriction should rather be understood along the same lines as the parallel restriction concerning participation in politics, which is involuntary as well (cf. Plutarch, *Adv. Colot.* 1125C = fr. 554 Us.). In both cases, it probably refers to concrete circumstances (*si quid intervenerit*) in which such exceptional initiatives may significantly contribute to the pleasures of the Epicurean or his community (cf. *supra*, 2.3.2.1d).

c) A second problem that should be discussed in this context concerns the tenet that the sage can found a school, but not so as to draw a crowd (οὐχ ὥστ' ὀχλαγωγῆσαι; Diog. Laert. 10,120 = fr. 564 Us.). Once

⁷⁵ In that perspective, it should cause no wonder that Plutarch closely connects politics and rhetoric in his anti-Epicurean polemics; see *Adv. Colot.* 1127A (= fr. 8 Us.); cf. *Non posse* 1087B (= fr. 552 Us.).

again, the qualifying restriction recalls the perspective of the maxim λάθε βιώσας. In this case, however, the question remains whether this perspective does not entail an important problem. As has been argued by B. Frischer, Epicurus' preference for a sequestered life might undermine the future of the school: for how could the Epicureans find new recruits if they have to stay in their Garden?⁷⁶ It is true that Epicurus did not have to worry about the small number of his students, since, according to Diogenes Laertius (10,10), friends came from everywhere (πανταχόθεν) in order to live with him in the Garden. This observation, however, causes even more problems rather than solving them. If Epicurus indeed proved successful in founding a school, did he not transgress the restrictions he himself formulated? Or is there another answer to the question that was so often asked in Cicero's days: *cur tam multi sint Epicurei* (*fin.* 1,25)?

Frischer is convinced that the Epicureans generally maintained their sequestered life and tried to gain new adepts through personal contacts and by erecting statues. No doubt Frischer is right in both refusing to regard Epicurus' success as the result of large-scale propaganda campaigns and in his underlining the importance of personal contacts (which is perfectly in line with the restriction οὐχ ὥστ' ὀχλαγωγῆσαι). Frischer seriously overstates, however, the dilemma between active recruitment and Epicurus' advice to 'live unnoticed'. This dilemma rests on too absolute of an interpretation of the maxim λάθε βιώσας. Indeed, the fact that Epicurus opts for a sequestered life does not imply that he forbids his followers to leave the Garden. Besides, one should not underestimate the attraction which the Epicurean way of life had for other people, whether they were seduced by the Siren-charms of Epicurus' doctrines (Diog. Laert. 10,9), by his tenets on pleasure (Cicero, *fin.* 1,25), by mere curiosity,⁷⁷ or by their observation that his philosophy indeed contributed to their happiness. Even this great attraction need not run counter to the restriction οὐχ ὥστ' ὀχλαγωγῆσαι, as one may safely presume that the Garden was far too small to host, for instance, the two thousand students who used to attend the lectures of Theophrastus (Diog. Laert. 5,37). Finally, it is most natural to assume that the Epicureans also recruited among their own children. Yet this

⁷⁶ B. Frischer (1982) and (1983).

⁷⁷ Cf. Seneca, *epist.* 68,4–5; Diog. Laert. 9,112 (on Timon of Phlius): "some of the philosophers catch their pupils by pursuing them, others by fleeing from them, as for instance Timon."

is denied by Frischer, who claims that the Epicureans sent their children to normal Hellenistic schools, pointing to the fact that we know of no case of a second-generation Epicurean, and arguing that the Epicureans brought in receptive outsiders rather than indoctrinating their own children: “It may well be that the Epicureans refrained from educating their children because they considered the direct and alienating experience of the dominant culture—and, *a fortiori*, of its institutions of acculturation—constitutive for conversion to Epicureanism. [...] One can only escape from a prison in which one has been incarcerated”.⁷⁸ Frischer’s view, however, is based on a debatable *argumentum e silentio*: the fact that we do not know second-generation Epicureans does not entail that they have never existed. Even more, we do know that both the son of Metrodorus and the son of Polyaeus studied under Hermarchus (Diog. Laert. 10,19), and one may mention in this context as well a letter which was written to an unknown child⁷⁹ (fr. 176 Us.). It is true of course that they may have left the Garden after reaching adulthood, but some of them may have stayed as well. Furthermore, it is rather unlikely that the Epicureans would themselves contribute to the corruption of their own children, even if that corruption was meant only to be temporary. Epicurus emphatically stated, at the very beginning of his *Letter to Menoeceus*, that one is never too young to secure the health of one’s soul (122). If there were indeed children in the Garden, Epicurus will not merely have regarded them as *specula naturae* (Cicero, *fin.* 2,32 = fr. 398 Us.), but will also have tried to ensure from the very beginning that they remained so later in their life as well.

2.3.2.3. The last source in which the maxim λάθε βιώσας is connected with another doctrine of Epicurus is found in Philostratus. In his *Life of Apollonius*, he links the maxim to its complementary counterpart λάθε ἀποβιώσας (8,28). Now it remains uncertain whether this counterpart can be traced back to Epicurus himself. Its formulation may find its origin in a rhetorical *amplificatio* of Philostratus,⁸⁰ and the idea of an unnoticed death was a well-known topos in his day. It returns, for instance, in *Anth. Graec.* 15,20 and *Anth. Lat.* 408,8. Its earliest occurrence

⁷⁸ B. Frischer (1982), 64.

⁷⁹ There is much discussion about the author of the letter; see F. Longo Auricchio (1988), 109–110.

⁸⁰ The term ἀποβιώω never appears in Epicurus’ extant writings; and cf. Plutarch, *De lat. viv.* 1129A (ἵνα μὴδὲ ἀποθανόντες [instead of ἀποβιώσαντες] λάθωσιν).

in extant literature may well be in Horace, *epist.* 1,17,10, a passage that both Ps.-Acro (*ad loc.*, II, p. 462 Hauthal) and Porphyrio (*ad loc.*, p. 342,20–23 Hold.) connect to the Epicurean maxim λάθε βιώσας. Furthermore, in his *Letter to Menoeceus*, Epicurus argues that it is the same practice which produces a good life and a good death (126: τὴν αὐτὴν εἶναι μελέτην τοῦ καλῶς ζῆν καὶ τοῦ καλῶς ἀποθνήσκειν). Even if Epicurus is not the author of the maxim λάθε ἀποβιώσας, he would no doubt have agreed with its advice.⁸¹

The advice to die unnoticed was no less offensive to traditional thinking than its counterpart. In line with the old heroic ethos of Homer, the first elegiac poets urged their audience to a glorious death on the battlefield (e.g. Callinus, fr. 1 West; Tyrtaeus, frs. 10–12 West), and more than a century later, Simonides still refers in a similar context to an honourable death as the greatest part of virtue (*Anth. Graec.* 7,253 = fr. 127 Edmonds). But even away from the battlefield, one could pursue a famous death. One should only recall the theatrical deaths of Antony and Cleopatra (Plutarch, *Ant.* 76,1–86,3) or the suicide of Cato the Younger (*Ca. Mi.* 68,1–70,6). Private persons, too, sometimes succeeded in reaching great fame by a notorious death. The classic example is Arria, the wife of Caecina Paetus, who plunged a dagger into her breast, pulled it out and gave it to her husband with the famous comment *Paete non dolet* (Pliny, *epist.* 3,16,6). Pliny adds that with this deed and these words, she had fame and immortality before her eyes (*gloria et aeternitas ante oculos erant*).

In his polemic against Epicurus, Plutarch tries to show that such a glorious death would be pursued by everyone. First, he introduces a hypothetical case: suppose that an ordinary person is granted one hour to use either for an honourable deed (καλὴν πράξιν) or for some pleasure (ἀπόλαυσιν), but then has to die immediately afterwards. Who would in such a case prefer the pleasures of love or wine to great deeds such as tyrannicide? Plutarch even answers his rhetorical question in an apodictic way: ἐγὼ μὲν οὐδένα νομίζω (*Non posse* 1099AB).⁸² This conclusion is further argued by a second observation taken from everyday

⁸¹ The many anonymous epitaphs of the genre οὐκ ἦμην, ἐγενόμην, οὐκ εἰμί, οὐ μέλει μοι (*Non fui, fui, non sum, non curo*; J. Ferguson (1990), 2297) fit in very well with this advice, but as their Epicurean origin is by no means certain (J. Salem (1989), 223–224), one better refrains from basing too many conclusions on them.

⁸² Cf. also Solon, fr. 33 West (= Plutarch, *Sol.* 14,9), about an average Athenian who would prefer to be tyrant of Athens for one day, and then being killed together with his family. Plutarch would no doubt have regarded it as particularly significant that the

life: before entering the arena, gladiators find greater pleasure in recommending their women to the care of their friends and in setting free their slaves than in enjoying the luxurious meat set before them (1099B). Both cases show that, on the point of death, honourable deeds should be preferred to the vile pleasures advocated by Epicurus.

What would Epicurus' answer be to all this? First of all, he would no doubt deal with Plutarch's two cases separately. If he would be granted one hour before dying, he would no doubt quietly opt for ἀπόλαυσις. This is not only the direct consequence of the passage from the *Letter to Menoeceus* mentioned above, but also from his entire philosophy. The Epicurean should maintain the same general outlook on life to the very end and not let his last hour be troubled by vain and unlimited desires such as the one for immortal renown. Furthermore, the hedonistic *calculus* will show him that the arduous efforts required for such great deeds will never bring him greater pleasures, given the fact that the lack of all sensations after his death will make it impossible to enjoy his posthumous fame (*RS* 2). Plutarch's hypothetical case is very interesting because it brings the dilemma between honour and pleasure to a head and thus throws light upon the radical consequences of Epicurus' view. But Epicurus' answer to Plutarch's rhetorical question would have been completely different, and while it would have been equally clear (ἐγὼ μὲν ἕκαστον νομίζω), it would, no doubt, have been qualified as well (εἰ συμμετρήσει τοῦτο κρίνεται).

That Plutarch's second case does not pose any problem to an Epicurean perspective appears from what is no doubt Epicurus' most famous letter, namely the one he wrote on the last day of his life (Diog. Laert. 10,22 = fr. 138 Us.). Even at that moment, tormented by excruciating pains, he consistently focuses on his pleasures, which he derives not from luxurious dishes, but from the recollection of previous discussions. Then, at the end of the short letter, he recommends the children of Metrodorus to the care of his addressee, thus adopting basically the same position as Plutarch's gladiators and for the same reason: his recommending of the children will have added to the pleasures he could still enjoy. Rather than undermining Epicurus' position, Plutarch's example of the gladiators is a good illustration of truly Epicurean conduct.

only counter examples to his thesis are to be found in a comedy (Terence, *Phorm.* 165–166) and in a passionate plea of Aphrodite herself (Nonnus, *D.* 4,147–159).

2.4. *The motivations behind λάθε βιώσας*

The foregoing analysis may have clarified the meaning, scope, and implications of the maxim λάθε βιώσας. There is, however, still a question that remains open: were there any internal or external factors that persuaded Epicurus to formulate this advice, apart from his theoretical arguments? Is it possible to find other, specific motivations that led to the maxim?

In one of his letters, Epicurus, looking back on his friendship with Metrodorus, claimed that their happiness was so great that they were not harmed by remaining unknown and almost unheard of (Seneca, *epist.* 79,15 = fr. 188 Us. and Metrodorus, test. 23 K.). If that is true, the maxim λάθε βιώσας may have been the result of practical experience and Epicurus may have arrived, in the words of Plutarch, at his doctrines by using them (*De prof. in virt.* 79F–80A: τῷ χρῆσθαι ποιοῦντες τὰ δόγματα). More than one argument, however, can be adduced against this conclusion. First of all, Epicurus wrote the letter late in his life, many years after the death of Metrodorus (*multis iam annis Metrodoro suo superstes*), and he may well have presented in it a highly idealised picture of the past. For indeed, the attacks of Timocrates will no doubt have contributed to Epicurus' reputation—albeit in a negative sense—and fragments from contemporary comedy writers also show that Epicurus was far from unknown in Athens.⁸³ If Epicurus' claim is correct at all, it probably only applies to the first years spent in Athens. It is true that this restriction may support the above conclusion rather than undermine it. There is, however, still another element that is important. It is most likely that the perspective in which this fragment should be placed is not autobiography but *Seelenheilung*. Epicurus' praise of his friendship with Metrodorus might have had a double function. He presents Metrodorus and himself as good examples worthy of imitation and who show that his philosophy indeed leads to happiness (*protreptic* function). At the same time, his argument may cure the vain desires of his addressee, and persuade him to opt for the great pleasures which an 'unnoticed life' entails (*psychotherapeutic* function). If this interpretation holds true, the passage adds to our understanding of Epicurus' method of *Seelenheilung*, to be sure, but contains no information about what motivated Epicurus to formulate his advice λάθε βιώσας.

⁸³ E.g. Bato (in Athenaeus, 3,103cd and 7,279ab = fr. 427 Us.) and Damoxenus (*ibid.* 3,102a–103b = p. 104,15–18 Us.).

In Antiquity, Epicurus' advice to seek a sequestered life was sometimes explained as a result of his character. According to Diogenes Laertius (10,10), for instance, Epicurus refrained from taking part in politics through excessive gentleness (ὑπερβολῇ ἐπιεικείας), whereas Plutarch (*Non posse* 1100B) argues that Epicurus' choice merely gives evidence of weakness or softness (δι' ἀσθένειαν ἢ μαλακίαν). Such explanations, however, are to a large extent conditioned by their eulogising or polemical contexts, and while illustrating the typical ancient interest in the author's ἦθος, they remain in the end unreliable hypotheses.

The most well-known modern answer connects Epicurus' advice λάθε βιώσας to the great political changes that occurred after Alexander the Great. It has for a long time been the *communis opinio* that the ruin of the πόλις led to a general turn towards the individual, who was thrown upon his own resources because of the dissolution of the existing social framework. This view, however, is more and more questioned in recent literature, and with good reason.⁸⁴ For as has been argued above (*supra*, 2.3.2.1d), Epicurus still continues to think within the traditional framework of the πόλις,⁸⁵ as even centuries later will Dio of Prusa and Plutarch. Changed political circumstances can require more modest ideals and changes in concrete political conduct (cf. Plutarch, *Praec. ger. reip.* 814C), to be sure, but need not lead to a decision to abandon politics all together. In short, the decline of the πόλις after Alexander cannot be regarded as a sufficient motivation for Epicurus' choice to 'live unnoticed'.

If the general course of political events proves insufficient to explain Epicurus' advice λάθε βιώσας, more specific events in Epicurus' life might clarify the motivations behind the maxim. Thus N.W. DeWitt suggested that the Epicurean decision to withdraw from public life could be traced back to the painful expulsion from Mytilene at the very beginning of Epicurus' philosophical career.⁸⁶ H. Steckel restricts Epicurus' withdrawal to the last years of his life and interprets it as the direct result of Lysimachus' defeat. In Steckel's view, it was the death of Epicurus' political patron, and the growing influence of the opposite party, which forced him to abandon politics. The maxim λάθε βιώσας

⁸⁴ See, e.g., K. Algra (2003), 265–266 (where further literature can be found).

⁸⁵ Cf. also A.A. Long – D.N. Sedley (1987), I, 136: "the world for which Epicurus devised his own social prescriptions continues to be that of the Greek *polis*".

⁸⁶ N.W. DeWitt (1936), 56.

then proves to be no more than a general *bon mot*.⁸⁷ It is clear, however, that in suggesting such disillusion and readjustment of Epicurus' original aims, both theories are in flat contradiction with all of the ancient sources,⁸⁸ where the sequestered life is never regarded as the *involuntary* alternative, as a kind of δεύτερος πλοῦς, inferior to voluntary participation in public life. If it is safe to state that Epicurus' arguments in favour of a sequestered life were no mere rationalisations, the interpretations of DeWitt and Steckel should strike one as unreasonable.

Often, Epicurus' advice λάθε βιώσας has been regarded as a positive or negative response to earlier philosophical ideas. B. Frischer interprets Epicurus' dissuasion from engaging in politics as a reflexive reaction to the practical political failures of his philosophical predecessors.⁸⁹ Now it may well be true that Epicurus called Plato's followers 'flatterers of Dionysius' (Diog. Laert. 10,8 = fr. 238 Us.) and he will no doubt have been radically opposed to the political finality of the Guardian's education as propagated in the *Republic*,⁹⁰ but the question remains whether it is not Epicurus' doctrine that leads to an attack against Plato rather than *vice versa*. F. Wehrli tries to establish a parallel between Epicurus' position and the old Greek wisdom that promoted an inconspicuous life in order to avoid the envy of the gods.⁹¹ But it is clear that the motif of divine φθόνος is fundamentally opposed to the spirit of Epicurus' philosophy, which rather intended to deliver man from all superstitious fears of revengeful gods. According to B. Farrington, Epicurus followed Socrates in his attitude to politics, even "with a fidelity which Plato lacked".⁹² But although it is true that Socrates deliberately refrained from assuming political offices (cf. Plato, *Ap.* 31d–32a), he did not withdraw but rather entered public life as a private citizen. He was not to be found in a secluded Garden but in the marketplace or the palaestra (Dio of Prusa, 54,3; cf. Xenophon, *Mem.* 1,1,10: ἀεὶ μὲν ἦν ἐν τῷ πανεργῷ). Moreover, Epicurus did not regard Socrates as an example worthy of imitation.⁹³ More plausible is the view of R. Philippson,

⁸⁷ H. Steckel (1968), 591–592. M.L. Silvestre (1995), 136 even regards the maxim as an *alibi*.

⁸⁸ Cf. G. Arrighetti (1973), 683.

⁸⁹ B. Frischer (1982), 39.

⁹⁰ See, e.g., J. Salem (1989), 38 and O. Bloch (1993), 90.

⁹¹ F. Wehrli (1931), 105.

⁹² B. Farrington (1967), 14.

⁹³ M.T. Riley (1980) and K. Kleve (1983); cf. also P.A. Vander Waerdt (1989), 253–259.

who establishes a parallel between Epicurus' political thinking and that of Democritus.⁹⁴ For even though Epicurus adopted a critical attitude towards this predecessor as well, he usually showed his respect for him and shared many of his convictions.⁹⁵ Moreover, it is interesting to note that Democritus himself may have advocated the ideal of an 'unnoticed life', although the details about his position are not perfectly clear (cf. *supra*, 1.10.2). Epicurus would never have admitted, however, that he borrowed his view from Democritus to some extent, but would rather have underlined his independence as a thinker (cf., e.g., Plutarch, *Non posse* 1100A).

Finally, Epicurus' advice to opt for a sequestered life has been interpreted as a reaction against the society of his days.⁹⁶ The motivation behind the maxim then proves to be the wish to replace the existing social structures by a better alternative. The Garden should be understood as a 'social experiment',⁹⁷ a 'society of friends',⁹⁸ or even an 'alternative polis'.⁹⁹ Even though such interpretations have a certain attractiveness, it is safer to conclude that it was not Epicurus' intention to carry out social reforms. If he preferred to retire from politics, he did so for the sake of his own tranquillity of mind rather than in order to revolt.¹⁰⁰

In this way, we finally end up with Epicurus' theoretical arguments in favour of an 'unnoticed life'. The most important motivation of the maxim *λάθε βιώσας* should be sought in Epicurus' philosophical thinking. He did not need external circumstances or predecessors, but only the sober reasoning (cf. *Epist. ad Men.* 132) of the hedonistic *calculus* to understand that participation in politics would usually harm his happiness. The safest conclusion, then, is that Epicurus formulated his maxim *λάθε βιώσας* because he was convinced that it was generally the best road to a pleasant life. For indeed, writing on Epicurus means that the last word should be pleasure.

⁹⁴ R. Philippson (1910), 433–434 (following R. Hirzel (1877), 134–154).

⁹⁵ Cf. P.M. Huby (1978); cf. also D.N. Sedley (1976a), 134–135.

⁹⁶ Cf., e.g., A.A. Long – D.N. Sedley (1987), I, 137, who regard Epicureanism as "a radical but selective critique of contemporary politics, rather than the apolitical posture with which it is frequently identified".

⁹⁷ K. Freeman (1938).

⁹⁸ C. Diano (1967).

⁹⁹ B. Frischer (1982), 63.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. J. Salem (1989), 148.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EPICUREANS OF THE FIRST GENERATION: EPICURUS' ΣΥΜΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΟΥΝΤΕΣ

*Metrodorum et Hermarchum et Polyaeum
magnos viros non schola Epicuri sed contu-
bernium fecit*

(Seneca, *epist.* 6,6)

3.1. *A quick glance in the Garden*

Even if Epicurus in the end avoided absolute conclusions, he could be confident that his advice to ‘live unnoticed’ was based on good arguments. The question then remains as to what extent these arguments also persuaded Epicurus’ own students. Did they agree with his theoretical arguments, on the one hand, and on the other hand, did they follow in his footsteps by choosing to adopt an ‘unnoticed life’? The theoretical convictions and the practical way of life of the first generation of Epicureans is interesting, since they show how the maxim was understood and applied by Epicurus’ own students. Unfortunately, however, comparatively little is known about their lives and convictions.

In concrete practice, most Epicureans of the first generation probably tried to apply the advice of their καθηγεμόν. The four ἄνδρες¹ consistently refrained from assuming political offices and at least some of their followers did the same. A certain Epicurean, for instance, is praised by Philodemus for having preferred a quiet life and for not having held any office during the sixty-three years of his life (Πραγματεῖαι, col. xxiii, 4–10 M.). Philistas, too, served as a noteworthy example, since he never received the things that are admired among the multitude² (Carneiscus, col. xvii, 2–6 Cap.). On the other hand, sev-

¹ On the word as a technical term to denote the founding fathers of the Garden in later texts, see F. Longo Auricchio (1978), 23–24 and 26–30.

² According to M. Capasso (1988), 71, the same was true for Carneiscus himself: “Carneisco [...], autentico interprete, in definitiva, insieme con Filista da lui esaltato, della dottrina del *lathe biosas*.”

eral Epicureans occupied influential political positions. Idomeneus, for instance, had as a minister important matters at hand (fr. 13 Angeli), but he was recalled by Epicurus and probably followed the latter's advice (cf. fr. 16 Angeli).³ Mithres, too, served as a minister (Diog. Laert. 2,102 and 10,4; Plutarch, *Adv. Colot.* 1126F) and he likewise abandoned politics, albeit forced by circumstances. It is clear, then, that in a political perspective, the maxim *λάθε βιώσας* was no condition of admission to the Garden,⁴ nor a law of the Medes and Persians for every individual member, even though it no doubt remained the preferable alternative for most of them.

With regards to rhetoric, Epicurus' maxim *λάθε βιώσας* may also have left its influence. As far as we know, no Epicurean of the first generation pursued a great reputation as a brilliant orator. The case of Hermarchus is interesting in this perspective since he was a student of rhetoric in his youth (Diog. Laert. 10,24 = fr. 1 L.A.), who later abandoned his rhetorical ambitions⁵ and unmasked the vain presumptions of rhetorical education.⁶ The soil of the Garden was no fertile breeding ground for rhetorical pieces of bravado.

Finally, we know of no member of Epicurus' community who sought to attract attention by a theatrical death. Most of his students presumably died unnoticed in the private circle of their friends. That such an unnoticed death did not necessarily exclude all courage was shown by Metrodorus. Epicurus in any case praised his friend for having remained undaunted by troubles and death (Diog. Laert. 10,23 =

³ Cf. A. Angeli (1993), 12–13.

⁴ It might have served as a condition of admission to the scholarchate. This, at least, is suggested by A. Angeli (1981), 45: "Poiché l'esperienza politica di Idomeneo urta con le motivazioni etiche del *λάθε βιώσας*, essa diviene ancora più problematica se si pensa che egli non fu un semplice adepto, ma diresse insieme con Leonteo la comunità epicurea di Lampsaco. Ed Epicuro si preoccupò troppo della compattezza della sua scuola per poter affidare un simile compito di responsabilità a chi non avesse assimilato fedelmente il suo insegnamento".

⁵ One should recall in this context the notorious fragment from one of Epicurus' letters, preserved by Diogenes of Oenoanda (fr. 127, I, 3–7 = fr. 53 L.A.), in which Epicurus assures his addressee that he will turn away from the speeches of the rhetoricians in order to hear something of the Epicurean doctrines. It is far from certain, however, that the addressee of the letter should be identified with Hermarchus; cf. F. Longo Auricchio (1988), 176–177.

⁶ In a polemic against Alexinus, for instance, he claimed that the knowledge of rhetoric is of no advantage for a politician: cooks and tavern-keepers can serve the public interest too, and even illiterate persons are able to discern what is useful for the state (Philodemus, *Rhet. II* [*PHerc.* 1674], col. XLVIII, 1–31 L.A. = Hermarchus, fr. 36 L.A.).

Metrodorus, test. 1 K.; cf. also fr. 46 K.). No doubt Metrodorus' conduct should be regarded as an example of true Epicurean bravery. Even though such bravery would hardly meet the standards of a Platonist like Plutarch, it no doubt helped to secure Metrodorus a prominent place in the commemorative writings of the school.

The little information we have thus shows that the way of life of most Epicureans of the first generation was in line with the doctrine of their distinguished master. The same holds true for their theoretical convictions. Before examining the scanty fragments that have come down to us, one should briefly turn to a passage in the *Suda* (III, 450.9–10 Adler), where the maxim is not attributed to Epicurus himself but to his brother Neocles (ὅτι Νεοκλέους ἐστὶ τὸ λάθε βιώσας). If this information is reliable, one could still conclude that the passage provides a striking example of imitation and appropriation of Epicurus' own words by his close associates. More likely, the passage in the *Suda* is based on a misunderstanding: as Epicurus' father was called Neocles too (Diog. Laert. 10,1), the information provided by the *Suda* might well rest on a misinterpretation of a passage where the maxim was attributed to the son of Neocles (cf., e.g., Julian, *ad Them.* 255b: τὸν τοῦ Νεοκλέους, ὃς κελεύει λαθεῖν βιώσαντα). In other words, Νεοκλέους may be a patronymic rather than the name of Epicurus' brother.

Thus having eliminated Neocles as a source for the maxim, there are but few sources that inform us about the theoretical position of the Epicureans of the first generation with regard to their master's advice to 'live unnoticed'. Some fragments of Hermarchus and Colotes provide information which may indirectly illustrate their attitude towards the maxim λάθε βιώσας. However, attention should first be given to Metrodorus, about whose views we are somewhat better informed.

3.2. *Metrodorus*

Writing on Metrodorus means that the first word should be Epicurus. The philological problems of ascribing certain sayings to Epicurus or Metrodorus are only too well known. More than one passage that Usener claimed for Epicurus was attributed to Metrodorus by Koerte; indeed, both editors could easily adduce ancient sources to support their position. If D. Clay rightly remarks that such cases often require Solomonic wisdom on the part of the editor, he aptly displays this wisdom himself by interpreting them in the light of the

typically Epicurean practice of imitation, emulation, and commemoration. Metrodorus often used the *ipsissima verba* of Epicurus in order to fully appropriate the latter's thinking and become a *paene alter Epicurus* (Cicero, *fin* 2,92 = fr. 5 K.).⁷ No doubt, this attitude was further stimulated by the great importance attached to memorisation.⁸ It is important to note, however, that Metrodorus' imitation and emulation not only contributed to his own Epicurean improvement, but also to that of the other members of the community. The great authority of Epicurus' words gains even more persuasiveness and efficiency by the simple fact that they are repeated by Metrodorus. Furthermore, such close imitation illustrates the harmony of both friends, who once again set a good example for their followers.⁹ In this light, one could expect that Metrodorus adopted the same position as Epicurus with regard to the maxim *λάθῃ βιώσας* as well. That this was indeed the case appears from several fragments.

3.2.1. Some of these fragments have a strongly polemical character. According to Plutarch (*Adv. Colot.* 1127B = fr. 31 K.), for instance, Metrodorus in his work *On philosophy* attacked certain sages (τῶν σοφῶν τινες) who try to imitate Lycurgus and Solon in their discourses on lives and on virtue. E. Bignone¹⁰ and R. Westman¹¹ think that Metrodorus' attack was directed against Plato and his followers; B. Einarson and P.H. De Lacy¹² identify his opponent as Diogenes the Cynic, whereas A. Angeli¹³ and M. Erler¹⁴ think of Diogenes and Zeno of Citium. All of these opponents are possible, although none of them, as far as we know, wrote works entitled *Περὶ βίων* or *Περὶ ἀρετῆς*.¹⁵ In the light of Philodemus, *Rhet.* II, 276, fr. x, 25–29 S., one might primarily think of the Peripatetics, even though it is equally possible that Metrodorus did not refer his attack at one specific (school of) philosopher(s), nor at well-defined philosophical treatises, but rather towards all philosophers who focus

⁷ D. Clay (1983b); cf. also A. Blanchard (1991) on *SV* 14.

⁸ D. Clay (1973), 278–279.

⁹ The implication of this interpretation is that Epicurus may also have repeated and appropriated words that were originally uttered by Metrodorus.

¹⁰ (1973), II, 56–58.

¹¹ (1955), 214.

¹² (1967), 310, n. e.

¹³ (1993), 23.

¹⁴ (1994a), 219–220.

¹⁵ Such treatises were written by Xenocrates (Diog. Laert. 4,12) and Theophrastus (Diog. Laert. 5,42 and 46), who both showed great interest in political matters.

on drawing up political constitutions rather than leading other people to happiness and a pleasant life. Such philosophers can be ridiculed for their vain pretensions (*Adv. Colot.* 1127C = fr. 32 K.). Metrodorus' attack on these philosophers can be regarded as a counterpart to Epicurus' criticism of the great statesmen of the past. Both renowned politicians and famous political philosophers are disqualified as examples worthy of imitation. Similarly to Epicurus, Metrodorus takes care that his destructive attack also contains a positive complement, in affirming the attractiveness of his own position: his polemical laughter gives evidence for his own true freedom (τὸν ἐλεύθερον ὡς ἀληθῶς γέλωτα γελάσαι).

Elsewhere, Metrodorus engaged himself in a polemic against the view of Epicurus' teacher Nausiphanes, who regarded φυσιολογία as the best foundation of rhetoric and argued that the sage should practice rhetoric or engage in politics (*Rhet. VIII*, II, 5, fr. 4, 10–13 S.; cf. II, 24, col. xxx, 16–25, col. xxx, 19 S.). It has often been pointed out that the latter aspect of Nausiphanes' position is diametrically opposed to Epicurus' maxim λάθε βιώσας.¹⁶ Still, the question remains whether Metrodorus explicitly thematised this topic in his polemic. One should turn to Philodemus for an answer, though with an important *caveat* at the back of one's mind. One should take care to avoid the rash conclusions of the *Quellenforscher*: Metrodorus' arguments may have been an important source of inspiration for Philodemus, to be sure, but the latter was no doubt independent enough to develop his own arguments, and usually refers to Metrodorus as *argumentum ex auctoritate* in order to strengthen his case. The safest course, then, consists in taking only those fragments into account where Metrodorus' name is explicitly mentioned (realising very well that even these may have been modified in order to fit Philodemus' own position better).

From such fragments, we learn that Metrodorus—at least according to Philodemus¹⁷—distinguished between a sophistic rhetoric, which he regarded as an art, and a practical or political rhetoric that should not

¹⁶ G. Manolidis (1987), 39: “Seine Aufforderung zu politischer Betätigung, die auf die Ehre abzielt, welche ihrerseits in der Achtung und dem Gedächtnis des Volkes ruht, bringt ihn von vornherein in die diametral entgegengesetzte Position zu der politischen Maxime (λάθε βιώσας) Epikurs”; G. Droz-Vincent (1993), 401: “Avec la seconde [viz. Nausiphanes' conviction that the sage should practice rhetoric and engage in politics] l'opposition ne pouvait qu'être totale, étant donné ce qu'on sait par ailleurs du refus épïcureien de tout engagement public, symbolisé par le fameux λάθε βιώσας”; F. Longo Auricchio – A. Tepedino Guerra (1980), 472; cf. already S. Sudhaus (1893a), 337.

¹⁷ D. Sedley (1989), 108–109 and 117 rightly shows that Philodemus should not unquestioningly be regarded as an objective and reliable source.

be considered as an art, not even a conjectural one.¹⁸ He denied the existence of an art of persuading the multitude (*Rhet. II* [*PHerc.* 1674], col. LIV, 32 – col. LV, 2 L.A.) and emphasised that in the domain of politics, success depended upon practical experience (*Rhet. II* [*PHerc.* 1672], col. xxii, 7–25 L.A.; cf. [*PHerc.* 1674], col. LIV, 22–27 L.A.). Presumably, it is the latter view that is important for Metrodorus' polemic against Nausiphanes: what the politician needs is insight into the public interest (*Rhet. II* [*PHerc.* 1672], col. xxii, 18–19 L.A. and *Rhet. III*, col. xli, 8–9 Ham.) and such an insight cannot be gained from φυσιολογία. In short, the politician and the natural philosopher are unable to judge each other's business (*Rhet. VIII*, II, 45, fr. 32, 11 – col. xlv, 2 S.).

It is clear from this brief survey that Metrodorus did not use the Epicurean maxim λάθε βιώσας in any of these fragments nor did he use one of its supporting arguments in order to refute Nausiphanes' thesis. This is hardly surprising in view of the polemical character of the work. For indeed, as appears from its title (Πρὸς τοὺς ἀπὸ φυσιολογίας λέγοντας ἀγαθοὺς εἶναι ῥήτορας; fr. 25 K. = *Rhet. II* [*PHerc.* 1674], col. xxvii, 16–19 L.A.), Metrodorus' target is the close connection between φυσιολογία and rhetoric. This link is not refuted by arguing that the sage should pursue the pleasures of an 'unnoticed life' instead of engaging in politics, but by showing that, *if* he enters public life, his success is not guaranteed by φυσιολογία. If that was indeed the core of Metrodorus' argument, his polemical approach is an early example of a typically eristic strategy which consists in refuting the opponent by adopting his own position and showing the difficulties it entails. It is clear that in such an approach, references to the maxim λάθε βιώσας would merely interfere with Metrodorus' argumentation rather than contribute to it.

3.2.2. In other fragments the emphasis is on the protreptic component rather than on the polemical one. This is the case, for instance, in one of the most notorious fragments of Metrodorus. Plutarch informs us that Metrodorus wrote to his brother that "there is no need to save the Greeks or to receive a crown from them for wisdom, but merely to eat and drink, and gratify the belly without harming it" (*Non posse* 1098CD and 1100D; *Adv. Colot.* 1125D = fr. 41 K.). Now the authenticity

¹⁸ Philodemus, *Rhet. I*, col. vii, 18–29 L.A.; *Rhet. II* [*PHerc.* 1674], col. xxvii, 8–19 L.A.; *Rhet. III*, col. xlii, 18–31 Ham.

of this fragment is not beyond doubt. According to D. Sedley, the words as such should not be traced back to Metrodorus' letter, but are the product of Timocrates' polemical misrepresentation. His "most charitable suggestion is that Timocrates meant to denounce Metrodorus' doctrine of pleasure, combined with the well-known Epicurean disrespect for political careerists, as *tantamount* to saying that there was no need to save Greece or to win honours for wisdom, and that all that mattered was eating and drinking, but that for rhetorical effect he used the form of direct quotation".¹⁹ I would like to propose an even more charitable interpretation, namely, that the fragment contains a verbatim quotation from Metrodorus' letter. If this is true, a great deal of misunderstanding may stem from the fact that Timocrates quoted his brother's words out of their context. This context might have contained important qualifications and restrictions, to be sure, but even this need not have been the case. The passage from the letter can also be understood in a psychotherapeutic context. For Metrodorus' presentation of the two poles of the dilemma appears to have many pedagogical advantages. By making, on the one hand, the two prototypical goals so concrete, he better clarifies the basic orientation of the true Epicurean, and by pushing, on the other hand, both alternatives to extremes, he aptly illustrates the radical implications of the Epicurean way of life (cf. Cicero, *fin.* 1,40–41; 2,63–65; *rep.* 3,27; Apuleius, *De Plat.* 2,8 p. 230–231 for a similar approach). At the same time, he can be sure that his words will better take root in the mind of his addressee. Moreover, whereas these words may of course be extremely provocative from a Platonic or Stoic point of view, in an Epicurean perspective they are an accurate expression of what really matters, and thus illustrate Metrodorus' psychotherapeutic *παρρησία* for which he was known among later members of his school (Philodemus, *De lib. dic.* fr. 15,6–10 and col. vb, 1–6).

Particularly interesting is a fragment from one of Metrodorus' letters, preserved by Seneca (*epist.* 79,16 = fr. 43 K.):

Hoc Metrodorus quoque in quadam epistula confitetur, se et Epicurum non satis enotuisse; sed post se et Epicurum magnum paratumque nomen habituros, qui voluissent per eadem ire vestigia.

¹⁹ D. Sedley (1976a), 132.

“Metrodorus also admits this fact in one of his letters: that Epicurus and he were not well known to the public; but he declares that after the lifetime of Epicurus and himself any man who might wish to follow in their footsteps would win great and ready-made renown.” (transl. R.M. Gummere)

This is quite a strange argument in an Epicurean context. The words *non satis enotuisse* have been understood as implying a certain disillusionment that seems at odds with the maxim λάθῃ βιώσας,²⁰ and the second part even forms a straightforward rejection of it: all later Epicureans can be sure of gaining great fame. I’m not sure what to make of this, even more because Metrodorus’ words are given without any context. Perhaps they could be connected with Epicurus’ argument to Idomeneus, that he will gain more fame through Epicurus’ letters than through his own political career (*supra*, 2.3.2.1c). Metrodorus could have used a similar argument: Epicurus and he could not expect fame, but in the future, love of honour should no longer deter anyone from becoming Epicurean. The passage then appears to have a strongly protreptic character. Presumably, the *magnum paratumque nomen* which he will receive is not based on great political achievements but on the intrinsic worth of being Epicurean. It is not impossible that the addressee of this letter was an ambitious young man whose vain desires Metrodorus wanted to nip in the bud (cf. fr. 56 K.), but this remains mere speculation.

The last fragment that is interesting for our study is to be found in Stobaeus (*Flor.* 4.4.26 = fr. 60 K.):

ἐν πόλει μήτε ὡς λέων ἀναστρέφου μήτε ὡς κώνωψ· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἐκπατεῖται, τὸ δὲ καιροφυλακεῖται.

“Do not behave in the city as a lion, nor as a gnat. For men avoid the one, and lie in wait for an opportunity against the other.”

Koerte correctly ranges the fragment under the title *de securitate in re publica*, for it is most likely that Metrodorus’ advice indeed concerns the way in which one can obtain security in the city. But what should be

²⁰ Cf. S. Sudhaus (1906), 46–47: “Der Glaube an den künftigen Sieg der Sache und die Resignation gegenüber dem gegenwärtigen unzureichenden Lehrerfolge kann nicht deutlicher ausgesprochen werden”; W. Kroll (1932), 1478: “Es kränkte M. sehr, daß die Lehre des Meisters nicht den gewünschten Erfolg hatte; aber er war überzeugt, daß er sich später einstellen würde”. One should note, however, that *non satis* is less unambiguous than *parum*, and is too weak a basis for assuming a disillusionment on Metrodorus’ part. According to P.H. Schrijvers (1970), 333, this passage (together with Seneca, *epist.* 79,15 = fr. 188 Us.) even shows “qu’il s’est manifesté une opposition, à

understood by the behaviour of the lion and that of the gnat? Perhaps the fragment can be interpreted against the background of *RS* 39.²¹ There, Epicurus advised to make akin to oneself the things that one can, while in any case avoiding to make the rest alien to oneself. This basic attitude is radically opposed to that of the lion, whose arrogant and aggressive conduct seems to entail the fact that he is avoided by everybody (ἐκπατεῖται). On the other hand, if one cannot avoid making enemies, one should opt for a sequestered life rather than imitating the gnat by continuously bothering other people (one may think of Socrates' behaviour!). If the lion can never expect to acquire ἀσφάλεια from others, the gnat can even be sure of getting βλάβαι: one merely watches for the right time (καιροφυλακεῖται) in order to put an end to all hindering troubles with one effective blow.

As in the previous fragment, this one should probably be understood in a context of *Seelenheilung*. It is a beautiful illustration of moral advice concerning practical conduct and recalls several aspects of Epicurus' advice to Idomeneus discussed above (*supra*, 2.3.2.1c). In both cases indeed, attention is given to concrete behaviour, and twice, the advice remains general enough to avoid pedantry. Furthermore, Metrodorus' apt comparison may have given his words a certain rhetorical power that made them even more efficient (and which may have given them their place in Stobaeus' collection). As a moral pedagogue at least, Metrodorus seems to have been able to emulate Epicurus.

3.2.3. To conclude, the scanty fragments that have come down to us show that Metrodorus in general endorsed basically the same position as Epicurus. It is true that Metrodorus' position often seems less nuanced than that of his master and friend, and that radical and absolute statements more than once take the place of restrictions and qualifications. This can be explained, however, to a great extent either by the (polemical or protreptic) context in which these statements were originally proposed, or by the one in which they have been preserved. Moreover, that Metrodorus did not *a priori* reject all participation in public life appears from his own attempt to help Mithres (cf. *supra*, 2.3.2.1). The importance of Metrodorus' commitment should not be overemphasised, to be sure: it never implied important political offices,

l'intérieur du Jardin même, à une pareille vie ésotérique", an interpretation which is obviously even less based on cogent arguments.

²¹ Cf. also Polyaeus, fr. 25 T.G. for a formal parallel.

but remained after all limited to an occasional intervention. Nevertheless, the question remains why it was precisely Metrodorus who went to the Piraeus. Epicurus could easily have sent other students, as he did in the case regarding Timocrates (Plutarch, *Adv. Colot.* 1126C). Did Metrodorus at last yield to secret ambitions (cf. *non satis enotuisse* in fr. 43 K.)? It is difficult to reach certainty in this matter, of course, but there is at least one alternative explanation to which I would give preference. We know that Epicurus and his whole community were much indebted to Mithres, who supported the Garden financially.²² With this perspective, it was merely a matter of gratitude²³ that the community would send not the first student who presented himself, but one of their most respected leaders.

3.3. *Hermarchus*

In the famous fragment from Hermarchus' great polemical work *Against Empedocles*, preserved in the first book of Porphyry's *De abstinentia* (fr. 34 L.A.), Epicurus' successor as scholarch deals with the origins and early evolution of justice and homicide law. When ancient legislators constituted the law on homicide, the main reason (τὴν γε πλείστην αἰτίαν) of their decision was, according to Hermarchus, their concern for what was useful (1,7,2). This was the case even if a natural οἰκείωσις might perhaps (τάχα) have exerted some influence as well (1,7,1). This has long been a controversial passage for obvious reasons: what does such a natural οἰκείωσις among human beings mean in an Epicurean perspective? Did Epicurus not deny that man is a social being by nature (cf. *supra*, 2.3.2.1)? Not surprisingly, the passage has often been interpreted as an intrusive gloss of Porphyry himself.²⁴

The difficulties that such an interpretation entails have been pointed out by P.A. Vander Waerdt, who himself ascribes the whole passage to Hermarchus and interprets it as an intelligent attack on the Stoic theory of οἰκείωσις.²⁵ In his view, Hermarchus' explicit polemic against

²² See Philodemus, *Πραγματεῖα*, col. xxx, 13–16 M. (= fr. 151 Us.); xxxi, 11–16 M. (= fr. 177 Us.), and xxxv inf. M. (= fr. [74] ²Arr.).

²³ On the great importance of gratitude in Epicurus' thinking, see N.W. DeWitt (1937).

²⁴ See, e.g., A. Grilli (1953), 74; S.G. Pembroke (1971), 147, n. 108; A.A. Long – D.N. Sedley (1987), II, 137.

²⁵ P.A. Vander Waerdt (1988).

Empedocles also implies an attack on more recent philosophical schools which adopted a similar position.²⁶ More precisely, Hermarchus here uses “οἰκείωσις in the Stoic sense as a natural kinship for our fellow man”, but “rejects their use of it as the foundation of justice by restricting this kinship to members of a community who contribute to its survival, thus retaining Epicurus’ doctrine that justice arises from a compact of advantage and disarming those elements in the Stoic teaching which contradict fundamental Epicurean principles. Hermarchus, in short, subsumes οἰκείωσις to Epicurus’ utilitarian perspective”.²⁷

While Vander Waerdt is probably right in attributing the whole passage to Hermarchus, his interpretation raises several difficulties. First of all, it entails a serious chronological problem. As Vander Waerdt himself admits,²⁸ the implication of his view is that the social pole of the Stoic doctrine of οἰκείωσις should already be traced back to Zeno. Even this assumption, however, does not solve the chronological problem, since there is evidence that the last book of Hermarchus’ *Against Empedocles* was written before 301 BC,²⁹ that is, at least one year before Zeno founded his school in the *Stoa Poikile*.³⁰ Moreover, even apart from the chronological problem, Vander Waerdt’s interpretation fails to convince one. For nowhere in the whole passage³¹ does the typically Stoic understanding of οἰκείωσις appear. In Hermarchus’ perspective, the natural οἰκείωσις among human beings is based on the likeness of their bodily form and their soul (διὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα τῆς μορφῆς καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς; 1,7,1). Vander Waerdt connects this characterisation of οἰκείωσις to the personal pole of the Stoic οἰκείωσις,³² but there is neither a trace of self-appropriation nor even of self-perception: Hermarchus’ οἰκείωσις is merely based on sense perception of other men.

To my mind, two hermeneutical keys are important for a correct understanding of this characterisation. First of all, it should be connected to the surrounding context. Indeed, it fits in very well with the primitive stage which Hermarchus is describing: for at an early moment in the history of human civilisation, decisions were based on sense per-

²⁶ Cf. also D. Obbink (1988), 432.

²⁷ P.A. Vander Waerdt (1988), 98.

²⁸ (1988), 104–106.

²⁹ Cf. F. Longo Auricchio (1988), 126–127, on Hermarchus, fr. 29 L.A.

³⁰ T. Dorandi (1999), 38.

³¹ That is, neither in 1,7,1 nor in 1,10,4 (τοῦ συγγενοῦς).

³² (1988), 105–106.

ception rather than on rationality.³³ Secondly, Hermarchus' characterisation of οἰκείωσις should also be understood against the background of the typically Epicurean conception of man. According to Epicurus, man is "this sort of a shape combined with animation" (ἄνθρωπός ἐστι τοιοντοῖνι μὲν ὁμοίωμα μετ' ἐμψυχίας; Sextus Empiricus, *M.* 7,267 and *P.* 2,25 = fr. 310 Us.). Again, sense perception is of prime importance here: what man is can be shown by indication (δεικτικῶς).

A combination of these two hermeneutical keys, then, might improve our understanding of what Hermarchus has in mind when he gives a place to natural οἰκείωσις. Primitive legislators were not proto-Stoics who felt akin to other human beings on account of their rationality, but merely saw that they resembled them more than, say, a snake or a lion, and thus were less inclined to kill them. It is clear of course that the first reason for their law on homicide retained its usefulness, but if Hermarchus was prepared to give a secondary place to an alternative explanation, it was one of common sense rather than a Stoic one.³⁴

If that is true, Hermarchus' reference to a natural οἰκείωσις among human beings in no way implies their social nature. Indeed, the primitive community that Hermarchus is describing rests on usefulness rather than on the social nature of its members. If Hermarchus' position thus proves to be perfectly in line with that of Epicurus, it nonetheless raises a new question: if primitive people were not social by nature and based their decisions on a concern for utility, why did they not opt for a sequestered life? Why indeed is there no reference to the maxim λάθε βιώσας to be found in Hermarchus' discussion?

The reason can be found in the specific focus of Hermarchus' exposition: the arguments in favour of leading an 'unnoticed life' prove either irrelevant or even invalid in the context of primitive society. First of all, in Epicurus' view, leading an 'unnoticed life' should protect against βλάβαι ἔξ ἀνθρώπων (*supra* 2.3.2.1b). In the context of Hermarchus' discussion, on the other hand, human beings should work together in order to defend themselves against the beasts. If they indeed separated themselves (I,10,3: τὸ χωρίζεσθαι), this separation at the same time implies living together in a community of mutually supporting members, whose

³³ Cf. ἀπιδόντες (I,7,1); λαβεῖν αἴσθησιν (I,7,3); ἄλογον μνήμην (I,10,4), and contrast I,7,4 on the contemporary situation: θεωροῦντες and ἀσυλλογίστων.

³⁴ This interpretation may illustrate how the mechanism of social appropriation, discussed by K. Algra (2003), is, in its own way, even at work in a primitive stage of the history of mankind.

collaboration is intended to avoid βλάβαι ἐκ θηρίων and will precisely lead to ἀσφάλεια ἐξ ἀνθρώπων. It is only in a later stage, when the threat of the beasts has been neutralised (cf. 1,10,4) and the community has been poisoned by irrational desires, that a second separation, this time from the multitude, will be necessary. This second separation is that of the maxim λάθε βιώσας, but this is no longer discussed in this fragment from Hermarchus.

Secondly, Epicurus' advice to 'live unnoticed' was a means to counter unlimited desires and secure the pleasures of ἡσυχία or *otium*. In the primitive stage, on the other hand, human beings could hardly regard *otium* as an attainable end, nor were they concerned with the problem of limitation. Indeed, our whole fragment deals with desires that are both natural and necessary, and more precisely with those that are necessary for life itself (*Epist. ad Men.* 127: πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ ζῆν; cf. 1,11,5: τὸν ἀναγκαῖον ἡμῶν βίον). It is the fulfilment of these desires that collaboration between human beings serves: their community is useful because it contributes to the survival of each of its members (τὴν κοινωνίαν, ἣ συνήργει πρὸς τὴν ἰδίαν ἐκάστου σωτηρίαν; 1,10,2). In such a context, the alternative of a sequestered life proves to be particularly harmful, as one would quickly be destroyed by beasts or by men who are up to no good (1,10,3). Again, it is only at a later stage that the maxim λάθε βιώσας becomes important, when the laws have been established and vain desires have arisen (cf. Lucretius, 5,1113–1135).

To conclude, even if Hermarchus does not explicitly thematise Epicurus' advice to 'live unnoticed' in the surviving fragment from his work *Against Empedocles*, the arguments which he develops are indirectly important for the maxim λάθε βιώσας because they throw light upon its presuppositions and upon the scope of the arguments in favour of it. The implications which Hermarchus' focus on primitive society proved to have for the pursuit of a sequestered life show that the maxim λάθε βιώσας is closely connected to a specific historical context. This is not without importance. If there have been periods in the past when the maxim did not express the most desirable course, it cannot be excluded in advance that there will also be periods in the future when it will prove equally problematic and when future generations of Epicureans will have to find their own solutions.

3.4. *Colotes*

With Colotes, we move from Athens to Lampsacus. After Epicurus had left the community of Lampsacus, its members kept themselves informed of their master's teaching through a lively correspondence. We can be fairly sure that Colotes, like other members of his community, received letters from Epicurus (frs. [62]–[66] ²Arr.) and was familiar even with the details of Epicurus' position. Furthermore, there is no evidence that he dissented from his master on any important position. He probably wrote a work entitled *Περὶ νόμων καὶ δόξης*,³⁵ which, according to R. Westman,³⁶ concerned the utility of the laws, political commitment, and uncertain fame. Though this hypothesis seems plausible, nothing can be said with certainty about the matter.

If there is one passage that might provide us with some information about Colotes' position with regards to the maxim *λάθε βιώσας*, it is to be found in Plutarch. The latter informs us that Colotes, at the end of his polemical work entitled *Περὶ τοῦ ὅτι κατὰ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων φιλοσόφων δόγματα οὐδὲ ζῆν ἔστιν*, praises ancient legislators for having brought security to men, adding that, if anyone undoes their action, we shall live a life of the brutes, all but devouring each other (*Adv. Colot.* 1124D). It is clear that a comparison with Hermarchus' view forces itself upon the reader. Both authors indeed deal with the action of ancient legislators, and both also emphasise that laws contribute to security. However, there also remain some differences between the two thinkers, which, slight though they may be, will have important consequences for the evaluation of their respective fragments as sources for the maxim *λάθε βιώσας*. Whereas Hermarchus pays a great deal of attention to what the laws manage to avoid (viz. *βλάβαι ἐκ θηρίων*), Colotes primarily underlines the positive result of security and peace. Even though the theme is not absent from Hermarchus' discussion (cf. 1,7,4 and 1,11,1), Colotes thus appears to lay greater emphasis on the relevance which the laws continue to have for contemporary generations. His focus moves from primitive society to the world of his own day.

If this is true, one could expect a reference to the doctrine of *λάθε βιώσας* in such a context. Quite remarkably, however, this doctrine has to yield to praising words about the positive consequences of monarchies and governments. Do the Epicureans in Lampsacus disagree with

³⁵ On the attribution of this work to Colotes, see E. Kondo (1974), 55.

³⁶ (1955), 38–39.

those in Athens on this topic? This is not necessarily the case. There are two reasons that explain the absence of a reference to the maxim *λάθε βιώσας* in Colotes' words. Moreover, these reasons also make it very unlikely that Colotes would have mentioned the maxim earlier or later in his work and thus show that one cannot appeal to the brevity of the fragment as a third factor of explanation.

First of all, Colotes' polemical treatise is dedicated to a king³⁷ and it would not have been very tactical to propagate the pleasures of an 'unnoticed life' in such a work. Secondly, the maxim did not contribute to Colotes' polemical argument. Indeed, he probably claimed at the end of his *scandalum magnatum* that all non-Epicurean philosophers abolished the laws by their doctrines,³⁸ the inference being, of course, that only the Epicureans respected the existing laws. If that is true, a reference to the maxim *λάθε βιώσας* might even damage his case: for if the laws are indeed strong enough to guarantee *ἀσφάλεια* and *ἡσυχία*, there is no need whatsoever to pursue these ends by means of an 'unnoticed life'. For this reason, Colotes focused on the positive consequences of monarchy rather than on the need to pursue security through leading a sequestered life. He merely chooses his arguments in view of his polemical goal. The implication of this interpretation is of course that the fragments from Colotes and Hermarchus do not have the same value as an indirect source for Epicurus' advice to 'live unnoticed'. Whereas the absence of this advice in Hermarchus' discussion indirectly illustrates the implications and presuppositions of the maxim *λάθε βιώσας*, in the case of Colotes it primarily throws light upon the latter's own polemical strategies.

³⁷ Probably Ptolemy II; cf. W. Crönert (1906), 13 and R. Westman (1955), 41.

³⁸ R. Westman (1955), 85–86 (*contra*: B. Einarson – P.H. De Lacy (1967), 179–180 and 186, according to whom Colotes' words are only directed against Arcesilaus).

CHAPTER FOUR

LATER GENERATIONS OF THE SCHOOL

*ipse Epicurus [...]
qui genus humanum ingenio superavit et omnis
restinxit, stellas exortus ut aetherius sol*

(Lucretius, 3,1042–1044)

4.1. *Lucretius*

4.1.1. *Introduction*

a) This next chapter in the history of the maxim λάθε βιώσας, on the views of later generations of Epicureans, will primarily deal with the Roman world. One of the most important sources, not merely for Epicureanism in Rome, but even for Epicurean philosophy as a whole, is of course Lucretius' *De rerum natura*. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to take a quick glance at Lucretius' Roman predecessors. For despite his own claim (5,336–337), Lucretius was not the first to introduce the Romans to Epicureanism. The first contacts are much earlier¹ and from the very beginning attention was also given to Epicurus' political philosophy.

As far as we know, the first contacts of the Romans with Epicureanism date back as far as the end of the third century B.C., when C. Fabricius was sent as an envoy to Pyrrhus and was introduced in the latter's headquarters by Cineas to Epicurus' theology, political philosophy, and to his view on the final end (Plutarch, *Pyrrh.* 20,3).² As could be expected, Fabricius' evaluation of Epicurus' philosophy was entirely negative (20,4). The high-spirited Roman soldier felt no need to submit himself to Epicurus' therapeutic philosophy.

¹ On the early history of Epicureanism in the Roman world, see, e.g., P. Grimal (1969); B. Gemelli (1983); M. Gigante (1983) and M. Erler (1994a), 363–368.

² Cf. also Cicero, *Cato* 43 and Valerius Maximus 4,3,6, who both focus on Epicurus' doctrine of pleasure, omitting his theology and political philosophy.

More than a century later, Rome was directly confronted with the concrete praxis of Epicurus' political philosophy. In 155 B.C., the Epicureans did not participate in the famous Athenian embassy of philosophers. Their absence was a statement in itself, which later attracted Cicero's attention (*Att.* 12,23,2). Unfortunately, the precise background of the Epicureans' decision not to participate is unknown. They may have weighed the pros and cons against each other and decided that the matter was after all not important enough to disturb their tranquility of mind, but it is equally possible that the state decided to exclude them from the embassy, even though they were basically prepared to participate in it.

Around the same moment, Alcibiades and Philiscus were banished from Rome "because of the pleasures they introduced" (δι' ἧς εἰσῆγοῦντο ἡδονάς; Athenaeus, 12,547a; cf. also Aelian, *VH* 9,12). The first real breakthrough of Epicureanism in Rome seems to have been brought about by authors like Amafinius, Rabirius, and Catius. According to Cicero, Amafinius' work was elementary and untechnical (*ac.* 1,5), aroused the interest of the multitude (*Tusc.* 4,6), and was particularly successful (*Tusc.* 4,7: *Italiam totam occupaverunt*). Even if it is the *communis opinio* that Cicero's words on the great success of Amafinius' works should be nuanced to a certain extent, Amafinius usually continues to be regarded as a popularising author who wrote for a wide audience of readers. I think this *communis opinio* should be reconsidered. For it is far from certain whether an Epicurean philosopher such as Amafinius indeed wished to reach such a broad reading public,³ and whether the degree of literacy in Rome was such at that moment that his work could even have been read by many people.⁴ I think it is more likely that Amafinius primarily addressed the intellectual upper-class rather than the common people. This is not to deny that his work was uncomplicated, but this general character of his writings should be explained by the vacuum concerning Greek philosophy which existed in Rome at that time (cf. Cicero, *Tusc.* 4,6), rather than by the low intellectual level

³ According to Epicurus, the sage can found a school, but not in order to draw a crowd (Diog. Laert. 10,120 = fr. 564 Us.); cf. *supra*, 2.3.2.2c.

⁴ Cf. W.V. Harris (1989), 227: "There was no such thing as 'popular literature' in the Roman Empire, if that means literature which became known to tens or hundreds of thousands of people by means of personal reading. [...] As for works written expressly for the masses, there were none."; for some critical observations on Harris' view, see N. Horsfall (1991).

of its intended readers. Indeed, when Amafinius wished to fill this vacuum, he did not immediately compose the most specialised, technical, and abstract philosophical treatises, but preferred to write a general, easy, and concrete introduction to the most fundamental principles. In short, the uncomplicated character of Amafinius' work should neither be explained by his purpose of popularising Epicurean philosophy, nor by his lack of erudition, but by justified pedagogical concerns.

On the other hand, Cicero's evaluation of Amafinius should not be isolated from its context of anti-Epicurean polemics. It largely results from the eristic strategy of belittling the opponent: Amafinius appears as the kind of author who should not be taken seriously by self-respecting intellectuals. He is not even worth reading (*Tusc.* 2,7: *numquam legerim*). Such contempt at the same time suggests that Cicero's own familiarity with Epicurean doctrine far exceeds that of his unintelligent opponent. The great success of this polemical presentation (which partly appeals to emotions—Cicero's rhetorical talents are important in his philosophical writings as well) appears from the attitude of Cassius, who, despite being Epicurean, did not prove insensitive to this kind of discourse (*fam.* 15,19,2).

b) Lucretius' didactic poem *De rerum natura* is the first extant Epicurean work in Latin literature. Its title—if authentic⁵—is a somewhat periphrastic translation of the Greek Περί φύσεως. As such, it is not the most obvious source for reflections that concern the maxim λάθε βιώσας. Yet, the work contains several passages (esp. the proems, but also some digressions) where Lucretius raises ethical matters. Most of these are key passages that have already received a great deal of attention. They have been interpreted as the core of the whole work, which thus in the end appears to have an ethical aim.⁶ Such a view is obviously too broad a generalisation: these passages are not necessarily more important than, say, Lucretius' argument that nothing can be created from nothing (1,149–214) or the twenty-nine (or thirty, according to the numbering of M.F. Smith) proofs of the mortality of the soul (3,425–829).

⁵ M. Erler (1994b), 406.

⁶ E.g. A.S. Cox (1971), 1: "what are in structural terms 'digressions' lie closest of all to the heart of the work"; J.D. Minyard (1985), 69, n. 47: "the aim of the present essay is to show that [...] the aim of the poem, in structure as well as thought, is relentlessly ethical".

Nor, on the other hand, should *De rerum natura* be regarded as a mere course in physics, the first one in the Epicurean school curriculum.⁷ For even apart from the fact that a didactic poem is probably not the most appropriate medium to expound complex physical theories in the philosopher's classroom,⁸ ethical topics do have their place in *De rerum natura*. Lucretius' work does not offer mere φυσιολογία, but his physical reflections clearly have ethical implications. On this point, Lucretius is not only perfectly in line with the position of his master, but with a whole philosophical tradition. It is striking that his poem can be compared in this respect to Seneca's *Naturales Quaestiones*. For the latter work also contains important sections dealing with ethical issues. Of course, Lucretius and Seneca had radically different points of departure and often reached diametrically opposed conclusions, but they both shared the same basic conviction that physics and ethics are bound to one another. Moreover, it is important to note that both in Lucretius' *De rerum natura* and in Seneca's *Naturales Quaestiones*, the ethical passages can often be found at the very beginning or end of a book. They should be understood as references to, and reminders of, a broader perspective in which the physical reflections should be placed, without, however, being reduced to second-rate material.⁹

4.1.2. *Lucretius' political philosophy in De rerum natura*

4.1.2.1. Lucretius' *De rerum natura* has more than once been interpreted as a political work.¹⁰ According to D.P. Fowler,¹¹ this reading of the poem is becoming a commonplace of modern scholarship, a commonplace moreover which "is more true than false". In order to make my own position clear from the very beginning, I think that the interpretation of Lucretius' poem as political is more false than true. I do not wish to deny, of course, that Lucretius' work had far-reaching implications for the traditional *mos maiorum* and in that sense indirectly—and, it should be emphasised, *only* indirectly—also for the domain of poli-

⁷ A view defended by K. Kleve (1979); cf. also Id. (1978), 41, and M. Erler (1997), 82.

⁸ Cf. T. Maslowski (1978), 218–219, and E. Asmis (1991), 13 (both on Philodemus).

⁹ On the place of ethics in Seneca's *Naturales Quaestiones*, see, e.g., G. Stahl (1964); C. Condoñer (1989), 1803–1822; J. Scott (1999). N. Gross (1989), 328–329 rather interprets the ethical digressions against the background of Seneca's own biography as a defence against the attacks on his inconsistent behaviour.

¹⁰ See esp. J.H. Nichols (1976) and J.D. Minyard (1985).

¹¹ (1989), 122.

tics. Moreover, one cannot but recognise that Lucretius makes use of imagery that is taken from political life in order to describe atomic processes.¹² Although it is true that these processes are *de facto* described in terms that recall a society which is strongly republican,¹³ I doubt whether this imagery also contains a direct political message. The danger of *Hineininterpretierung* is not imaginary in this case, since the general physical context does not by itself suggest such a political interpretation.

More controversial is the famous invocation to Venus with which the whole poem begins (1,1–49). Lucretius there asks for peace (29–40) and explicitly—albeit in rather vague terms—alludes to the troubles of his country (41: *patriai tempore iniquo*). These words have been interpreted in very different ways,¹⁴ and the whole prologue has been understood both as indirect propaganda for Caesar¹⁵ and as written for the *optimates*.¹⁶ This great discord among recent commentators is itself highly significant. In fact, nearly all of the interpretations require a great deal of speculative reconstruction and are based on often unprovable or at best plausible hypotheses (e.g. the relevance of the term *genetrix* in 1,1).

Even more hazardous, finally, is the thesis of A. Momigliano, who finds a connection between Lucretius' poem and the political commitment of many Epicureans at that time:

“the whole of Lucretius is a vigorous invitation to work and fight for high ideals. An atmosphere of magnanimous enthusiasm—so different from the λάθε βιώσας—is the legacy of Lucretius to the men of 44 B.C.”¹⁷

I think that this is a generalisation which entails a serious distortion of the scope of Lucretius' *De rerum natura*. Nonetheless, its explicit reference to the maxim λάθε βιώσας also makes it an ideal and challenging point of departure for a more detailed investigation.

¹² H. Sykes Davies (1931/2), 36–38; G. Cabisius (1984/5) and D.P. Fowler (1989), 145–149.

¹³ D.P. Fowler (1989), 147.

¹⁴ See recently G.O. Hutchinson (2001), with further bibliography. Noteworthy is the position of M. Erler (1994b), 400, according to whom the connection between the phrase *patriai tempore iniquo* and the inner political circumstances is nothing more than a mere hypothesis; I am inclined to agree. Cf. also J. Salem (1990), 28.

¹⁵ P. Grimal (1957a); cf. also Id. (1978), 234–246.

¹⁶ C. Salemmme (1977), 16–23.

¹⁷ (1941), 157.

4.1.2.2. It is much safer, indeed, to turn our attention to the passages in which Lucretius explicitly deals with political topics and to examine to what extent his position agrees or fails to agree with the view of Epicurus.

a) The first relevant passage is the famous proem of book 2 (*suave, mari magno*), where Lucretius opposes Epicurean pleasure to the misery of other people in three different ways. This misery, compared to a storm at sea (2,1–4) and the dangers of war (5–6), becomes especially evident in the daily competition and rivalry for the pursuit of wealth and political power (11–13). Lucretius' description of this troubled condition contains three elements which are already found in Epicurus. [a] First of all, the great misery appears as the direct result of misunderstanding what nature really demands, and a wrong judgement with regard to wealth and power (16–19), which in fact are of no profit for either body (23–38) or soul (39–52). This is perfectly in line with the traditional Epicurean theme of the pursuit of unlimited desires, which are neither natural nor necessary, and which harm real pleasure rather than contribute to it. [b] Furthermore, this pursuit of empty desires does not bring about greater security. Quite the reverse is true: it leads to a process of uninterrupted struggle and competition and thus to danger (6: *pericli*; 15: *quantisque periclis*). [c] Finally, this form of life entails a great deal of effort (2: *laborem*; 12: *labore*). This recalls Epicurus' argument of the great *πόνος* which is part and parcel of political life. The precise character of this argument derived from political praxis explains why Lucretius here uses many terms which belong to the political discourse of his own day.¹⁸ By clearly referring by means of his terminology to contemporary political praxis, Lucretius enhances the recognisability on which the persuasiveness of the argument is based. It thus becomes clear for the first time that Lucretius' allusions to Roman political life should not be understood as a mere game or as a cryptic message, but that they have a meaningful function within his Epicurean argument.

Diametrically opposed to the misery of most people are the pleasures of the Epicurean sage. The three elements now return in their opposite form. [a'] The sage shows himself satisfied with what nature really wants (16–19); his desires are both natural and necessary. In other words, his happiness depends on the limitation of his desires. [b']

¹⁸ Esp. in 11–13; cf. D.P. Fowler (1989), 134–135.

Secondly, he can enjoy the pleasures of stable security: he is on dry land during the storm (1–2), he knows that he is safe during the battles of war (6: *tua sine parte pericli*) and dwells in lofty and serene regions (8: *edita templa serena*) which, moreover, are well fortified (7: *bene munita*). It is clear that this security has its basis in the sage's decision for non-participation: he enjoys an ἀσφάλεια ἐξ ἡσυχίας. From this sequestered position, he can look down on others with pity and contempt.¹⁹ [c'] Finally, such an attitude yields the highest pleasure (7: *sed nil dulcius*). This pleasure does not merely rest on limitation and security, but also on the observation of the misery of others. Lucretius feels the need to specify his position: the pleasures of the Epicurean sage are not based on sadism or cruelty, but on his growing awareness of his own untroubled condition (3–4; cf. Cicero, *fin.* 1,62). A. Grilli²⁰ correctly connected Lucretius' position to that of Democritus (68 B 191 DK = Stobaeus, *Flor.* 3,1,210), but failed to see that there can be found even more parallels, which shows that both thinkers belong to a whole philosophical tradition.²¹ Indeed, the same idea returns in Plutarch (*De tranq. an.* 470A–471A) and Seneca (*dial.* 5,31,3)²² and should be understood as a specific technique that can be used during the process of *Seelenheilung*. The general idea is that, in order to reach personal tranquillity of mind, one better compare oneself to persons of inferior fortune. The brief allusion to this strategy at the beginning of the proem can be regarded as a faint though undeniable echo of the general psychotherapeutic character of Lucretius' Epicurean philosophy.

The previous analysis has shown that Lucretius' philosophical position in the proem of book 2 is perfectly in line with Epicurus' view. It entirely rests on some of the most important traditional arguments in support of a sequestered life and against participation in politics. Furthermore, it is important to note that the emphasis falls on the positive aspect of the Epicurean message. The description of the pleasures one can enjoy in perfectly safe *templa serena* is not merely a theoretical explo-

¹⁹ Cf. G.F. Else (1930), 166. The conclusion of E.B. Holtsmark (1967), 204 that the proem displays "the altruist's solicitude for his fellow human beings", and gives evidence of "active sympathy for man's condition", does not convince me. On the problem of the element of cruelty in the opening verses of the second book, see, e.g., C. Bailey (1947), 797.

²⁰ (1957), 261–263.

²¹ It is possible, though, that Democritus was the first to formulate the idea in his Περί εὐθυμίας.

²² More parallels in H. Broecker (1954), 104–106.

ration of the condition of the Epicurean sage, but also provides the proem with a strongly protreptic character.²³

b) The proem of book 3 and more precisely its conclusion (3,59–86) has received hardly less attention than that of book 2. There, Lucretius offers an original analysis of avarice and ambition, by relating them to the fear of death. It is important to underline from the very beginning that the verb *aluntur* (64) shows that fear of death is neither presented as the ultimate cause of these passions,²⁴ nor as the only one (as appears from the important qualification *non minimam partem*).²⁵ Since Lucretius' argument has been called exaggerated²⁶ and its logical validity questioned,²⁷ it is worthwhile to examine it in somewhat more detail.

Lucretius wants to prove the thesis that *avarities* and *honorum caeca cupido* are to a great extent fed by the fear of death (59–64). The starting point of his argument (65: *enim*) forms the widespread opinion that disgrace and poverty are a direct menace to one's life (and hence a lingering before the gates of death; 67). In other words, disgrace and poverty lead to death. If that is true, avoidance of death amounts to avoidance of disgrace and poverty and this avoidance can be equated with avarice and ambition. Indeed, *turpis contemptus* and *acris egestas* (65) perfectly correspond to *avarities* and *honorum caeca cupido* (59). Both passions are further elaborated in what follows (avarice in 70–73, ambition in 74–78). Now the logical conclusion of this whole argument can only be the following: a man who wishes to avoid death should be avaricious and ambitious or, in somewhat different terms, fear of death leads to avarice and ambition. Strictly speaking, this conclusion cannot be equated with the thesis that Lucretius wanted to prove, for such an equation would rest on an *ex consequentia* argument which was already listed as a fallacy by Aristotle (*SE* 167b1–20).²⁸ From a strictly logical point of view, then, Lucretius' argument is invalid even though one

²³ Cf., e.g., G.-B. Conte (1966), 338 and 367; B.P. Wallach (1975), 76.

²⁴ Cf. C. Bailey (1947), 1000: "Lucr. does not say that the fear of death is the ultimate cause of avarice and ambition, but that it largely supports them".

²⁵ Cf. P.H. Schrijvers (1970), 288.

²⁶ C. Bailey (1947), 1000.

²⁷ E.J. Kenney (1971), 84.

²⁸ The conclusion of Lucretius' argument, that fear of death leads to avarice and ambition ($p \rightarrow q$), indeed does not prove that the presence of such avarice and ambition (q) can be regarded as an indication of fear of death (p).

may add that the qualification *non minimam partem* helps in mending the logical problem.

Now that the essence of Lucretius' argument has become clear, the question remains as to what extent it is in line with Epicurus' own view. Many commentators have emphasised the original aspect of Lucretius' argument, while at the same time recognising that it fits in with the spirit of the Epicurean point of view. In an article which was widely discussed, J. Perret²⁹ strongly underlined Lucretius' originality, claiming that his argument finds its roots in the contemporary political circumstances. As we will see in a moment, the whole passage indeed contains elements which cannot be traced back to Epicurus' philosophical perspective. Nevertheless, Perret's interpretation in the end proves both insufficient and one-sided, and consequently fails to convince us.³⁰ P.H. Schrijvers,³¹ on the other hand, connects Lucretius' argument with the importance of imagination in Epicurus' thinking. Fear of death arises because people imagine their own condition *post mortem*. This is an interesting suggestion, although it in the end does not convince us either, for disgrace and poverty is not what one will receive after death but what will directly lead to death. They are not relevant for what comes *post mortem* but rather for what happens *ante mortem*. Often, Lucretius' position is connected with *RS* 7, and rightly so. The whole passage can indeed be seen as a development of Epicurus' thinking on *ἀσφάλεια*, although it remains true that the theme of the fear of death is not made explicit in *RS* 7.³² This general observation leads to the following evaluation of Lucretius' argument:

[1] Even if Lucretius basically remains faithful to the spirit of Epicurus' philosophy, the direct and explicit connection between avarice and ambition, on the one hand, and the fear of death, on the other, may well be his own idea. This connection can easily be explained as the prelude to book 3, where the problem of the soul and death receives a great deal of attention. Lucretius thus models his ethical reflections on the principal theme of the book. Conversely, the physical exposition which follows should be read against the background of the introduc-

²⁹ (1940).

³⁰ See, e.g., A. Desmouliez (1958) and W. Schmid (1978), 140–151.

³¹ (1970), 288–290.

³² Even fr. 458 Us. (= Porphyry, *Abst.* 1,54,3), where this theme is present, is far from an exact parallel. The context is entirely different, which also leads to small differences with regard to details; cf. also J. Perret (1940), 282, n. 3.

tory ethical perspective. As often in *De rerum natura*, there is a perfect cross-fertilisation between ethics and physics (cf. *supra*, 4.1.1b).

[2] Moreover, it is important to note that the whole passage implies a radical unmasking of political motivations and ideals. The politician is neither motivated by an honourable goal nor by the desire to help his fellow citizens, but by an (irrational and unfounded) fear of death, and political life itself is an uninterrupted series of bloodshed (70–71), cruelty (72) and treason (83–86). Again, Lucretius implicitly refers to the political reality of his time³³ and, once again, it is clear that these references have a meaningful part to play in his Epicurean argument. For indeed, the implicit attack on the contemporary political practice functions as a direct argument against participation in politics.

[3] There is even more to be said about Lucretius' allusions to the pernicious consequences of avarice and ambition for social life. In an interesting contribution, R.C. Monti³⁴ has related this aspect of Lucretius' argument to a typically Roman point of view. He argues that Lucretius' interest in the destructive consequences that avarice and ambition create for the whole community is opposed to the general Epicurean view, in which the state exists for the benefit of the individual. By attacking these passions primarily as *social* evils, Lucretius adopts the Roman aristocratic ideology where the individual has to serve the state. Though one should avoid too rash a generalisation—a Greek Platonist or Stoic could perfectly have adopted this 'Roman' perspective—Monti is undoubtedly right in emphasising that this aspect of Lucretius' argument has a basically non-Epicurean orientation,³⁵ and even that it could be connected with elements of the *mos maiorum* as this was constructed by the Romans themselves. Remarkably enough, this striking orientation is completely unnecessary for the strict logic of the argument. What, then, can its function be? According to Monti,³⁶ it should be understood as a *captatio benevolentiae*. Again, I basically agree: Lucretius thus shows that it is precisely the man who disagrees with Epicurus'

³³ E.g. in 70 (*sanguine civili*, with the commentary of E.J. Kenney (1971), 85); cf. D.P. Fowler (1989), 137–140.

³⁴ (1981), 58–66.

³⁵ See, however, V. Tsouna (2001a), 243, and (2001b), 168–169, who shows that the same orientation is also present respectively in Philodemus and in Torquatus' presentation in Cicero's *De finibus*.

³⁶ (1981), 65.

convictions who also violates the traditional *mos maiorum*. There is, however, a second element that should be taken into account. The peculiar presentation of Lucretius' argument can also be understood against a psychotherapeutic background of *Seelenheilung*, as a beautiful application of the technique which consists in starting from the beliefs of the patient and reorienting them towards an orthodox Epicurean point of view. This technique, which both Epicurus and Metrodorus had perfectly mastered (cf. *supra*, 2.3.2.1c and 3.2.2), is found elsewhere in *De rerum natura* too.³⁷ The whole passage, then, also illustrates how Lucretius succeeds in adopting a generally orthodox Epicurean perspective and explaining this perspective both in a personal way and relating it to the contemporary and local context in which he is writing.

c) Political ambition is also attacked in a short digression later in book 3. Lucretius wants to demonstrate that the famous mythical punishments after death actually exist in this life (3.978–979). Several concrete examples are introduced in order to illustrate this thesis. Sisyphus, for instance, appears as the prototype of the ambitious politician who always strives for power again, without ever succeeding to receive the benefits of his labours (995–1002). There has been a great deal of discussion about the sources of this passage. According to F. Cumont,³⁸ Lucretius' reflections have no direct parallel in Epicurus' own thinking and should ultimately be traced back to a Neopythagorean source. P. Boyancé³⁹ thinks of the Stoicising Academy in the tradition of Antiochus of Ascalon, whereas B. Wallach⁴⁰ is convinced that "Lucretius has combined a technique used by the diatribe with Epicurean themes which he has adapted from other sources". But there is no need to trace back this passage to such sources. It suffices to conclude that, even if there are no direct parallels to Epicurus' position, Lucretius' allegories basically fit in with the Epicurean point of view.

³⁷ A beautiful example can be found in 4.1124, where Lucretius takes popular morality concerning *officia* and *fama* as his starting point and uses this in his attack on love. In this case as well widespread opinions are used as the argument for an Epicurean thesis. For the importance of psychagogy in Lucretius, see, e.g., P.H. Schrijvers (1969) and (1970), *passim*; D. Clay (1983a), 169–266. On Lucretius as a teacher, see also S.F. Wiltshire (1974) and esp. M.R. Gale (2001), 22–27.

³⁸ (1920).

³⁹ (1963), 179–181.

⁴⁰ (1976), 90.

As a direct consequence of the broader context, the passage entirely focuses on the negative alternative. Each explicit reference to the positive alternative of a sequestered life is absent, because it is irrelevant to the context. Instead, all attention is focused on the self-imposed vexation of political life, which appears in a particularly negative light. First of all, Lucretius points to the great efforts inherent in political life: the politician suffers a *durum laborem* (999); he is rolling his rock up the hill with great effort (1000: *nixantem*). Once again, the political reality is unmasked as being a continuous source of misery.

Moreover, all of the politician's efforts are necessarily unsuccessful: *semper victus tristisque recedit* (997). Quite remarkably, the reason is not that the politician never reaches his final end. Even if he succeeds in arriving at the top (1001: *summo vertice*), his attempts are of no avail, for he will immediately find himself back at the bottom. It is clear that Lucretius is here much more radical and apodictic than Epicurus, as he fundamentally excludes any possibility of achieving a more permanent political success. The obvious reason for this position can, of course, be found in the content of the myth itself: as the rock always rolls down again, Lucretius' allegorical interpretation cannot but include the same component of ever-repeated failure. This is not, however, the only reason. Indeed, the Roman political system, which is clearly present in the background,⁴¹ also helps to explain why Lucretius adopts a more radical position than Epicurus. Was *imperium* never granted, then, in Rome? It was, but only for a short well-circumscribed period (usually one year). Afterwards, the politician had to render account for his office and could later try to be re-elected.⁴² To exercise the highest political offices uninterruptedly, however, was in principle impossible. In this respect, the world of Lucretius was fundamentally different from that of Epicurus, in which the political constitution of monarchy dominated the field of international politics. In the time of Epicurus, a king could strive for more permanent security through political power; such a strategy, even if not preferable, was at least thinkable (cf. *RS* 6). In the

⁴¹ D.P. Fowler (1989), 140 rightly remarks that it is in this passage that can be found "the most direct reference to contemporary political life".

⁴² Cf. 3,1002, with the brilliant analysis of D. West (1969), 102: "To resume office you had to return to the electorate. This is all clinched by 1002. The whole structure of the passage has alerted us for terms which fit both the torment and its allegorical application, and this is the climax. The rock makes for the level plain, *plani petit aequora campi*; and in electoral terms the candidate goes down to the Campus Martius to stand for election again."

late Roman Republic, on the other hand, it is far less evident. When Caesar decidedly followed this course, it brought him no security, but twenty-three wounds and death.

d) Finally, interesting material can be found in the elaborate genealogy of book 5. According to Lucretius, men originally live like wild beasts (5,932: *more ferarum*). In the most primitive stage, there is no community spirit and everyone lives for himself (958–961). Afterwards, neighbours begin to make contracts of mutual non-interference (1019–1020). Then, social life starts, though at a very limited level, for greater communities or cities do not yet exist. In this phase, living a sequestered life is obviously much less interesting than actively collaborating with neighbours to serve one's own personal interest. Indeed, the very survival of the human race results from the fact that most people indeed remained loyal to the contract (1025–1027). Mutual collaboration provides a certain amount of security, a protection against the harm that comes from the beasts (cf. 982–987 and 990–998) and especially from other hostile human beings (cf. 1023). It is clear that Lucretius' position basically agrees with that of Hermarchus. In this primitive stage of history, the advice to 'live unnoticed' would generally harm one's security rather than contribute to it.

A new phase in history begins when kings found cities and build citadels for their own protection (1108–1109). This is an important increase in the scale of social life, though the driving force behind this evolution undoubtedly remains the personal interest of the individual. The introduction of gold starts off a new process. People now begin to strive for fame and power in order to acquire the security which they need to enjoy their wealth (1113–1116 and 1120–1122). Here, the theme of political ambition returns. Lucretius' argument is built up around two important perspectives.

First of all, the problem is discussed from a historical point of view. By showing how and why political ambition arises at a well-defined moment in the genealogical process, Lucretius offers his readers an historical insight into this phenomenon and thus makes it more comprehensible.⁴³ Political ambition arose after an important increase in scale of the community and when the introduction of wealth for the first time entailed the problem of the limitation of desires.

⁴³ In that sense, Lucretius' reflections in this section of book 5 are a complement to his analysis of avarice and ambition at the beginning of book 3.

In that way, the historical perspective itself leads to a moral one. Indeed, Lucretius also evaluates political ambition from a moral point of view. In his first argument, both perspectives are combined, since it still focuses on the men of the past: they appeared to tread a dangerous path (1124) and thus did not reach their purpose of quiet security. In his next arguments, however, Lucretius switches to the present tense, and thus begins to offer general moral truths which are valid everywhere and in every period: ambitious people often fall victim to envy (1125–1128); political life appears to imply a great number of troubles (1131: *defessi sanguine sudent*; 1132: *luctantes*; cf. 1124: *certantes*), and the politician strives for a wisdom which comes from the lips of others, thus losing personal independence (1133–1134). Lucretius in this way again presents some of the traditional Epicurean arguments, combined as it is with a historical perspective.

One should note, however, that there remains a certain tension between the two perspectives. For, on the one hand, Lucretius deals with the distant past, while, on the other, he presents moral truths which are always valid. His Epicurean moral perspective transcends gradually developing history.⁴⁴ The direct result of this is again a radicalisation, which becomes evident in the particularly apodictic conclusion (1135: *nec magis id nunc est neque erit mox quam fuit ante*). Once again, Lucretius thus proves to be much less nuanced than Epicurus. The main reason is that Epicurus bases his qualifications often upon a *calculus* which takes concrete historical circumstances into account. Lucretius, even while dealing with historical matters, refrains from doing so. A case in point is also the *ergo* in 1136: murdering kings can be regarded as the logical conclusion of a general Epicurean truth.

In this context Lucretius also presents the positive alternative of the Epicurean sequestered life:

*ut satius multo iam sit parere quietum
quam regere imperio res velle et regna tenere.*
(5, 1129–1130)

“So that it is far better to obey in peace than to long to rule the world with kingly power and to sway kingdoms.” (transl. C. Bailey)

Once again, Lucretius follows in the footsteps of his master. His argument that the harm which comes from envy can be avoided by refraining from the pursuit of political power is perfectly in line with Epicurus’

⁴⁴ Cf. also D.J. Furley (1978), 27.

position. Withdrawal from public life again appears to be the best guarantee to obtain ἀσφάλεια ἐξ ἡσυχίας. Furthermore, one should note that Lucretius here, just as in the proem of book 2, presents his ideal in positive terms: not avoiding to rule, but *parere quietum*. The term *quietum* is placed at the end of the verse, where it receives most attention, but the word *parere* is also highly significant. Epicurus' alternative is not subversive or anarchistic, but turns out to educate obedient citizens. In this way, the passage receives a paraenetic and protreptic touch.

However, in this case too, there remains a certain tension between the historical and moral perspectives. On the one hand, Lucretius' historical account shows that Epicurus' doctrine of λάθε βιώσας only becomes relevant from a certain moment onwards. On the other hand, he nowhere shows any awareness of the historical value of Epicurus' moral evaluation. Nowhere do we find any explicit suggestion that there could be periods in the future when the choice for a sequestered life would not be the most preferable alternative. In this light, Momiigliano's suggestion to regard Lucretius as a direct preparation for the political commitment of the Epicureans at that time turns out to be highly problematic. If Lucretius' *De rerum natura* does contain any political message at all, it is that *parere quietum* is *always* better.

e) To conclude, most of Epicurus' arguments against participation in politics are also found in Lucretius' *De rerum natura*: the unmasking of political life as a source of troubles rather than pleasure, the view of political ambition as vain and unlimited desire which necessarily remains unfulfilled, the importance of acquiring security and avoiding the harm that comes from contempt and envy. In short, whenever political ambition is thematised, it is unambiguously rejected. Furthermore, Lucretius more than once mentions in positive terms the Epicurean alternative, that is, the great pleasures of a quiet and sequestered life. In all of these points he reveals himself as a completely orthodox Epicurean.

On the other hand, Lucretius usually proves to be less nuanced than Epicurus. Almost nowhere do we find the qualifications and restrictions that are typical of Epicurus. Lucretius never refers to exceptional cases in which participation in politics should be defended. Instead, he more than once arrives at strongly apodictic and absolute conclusions, without any historical awareness. One might object that Lucretius merely wished to give the broad outlines of Epicurus' moral philosophy and therefore refrained from elaborating upon details. Even if this is true,

however, a comparison with the Κύρια δόξαι shows that Epicurus himself even in such general contexts took care to avoid oversimplification. No doubt Lucretius could easily have done this too. All this may come close to—and in a certain sense even radicalises—D. Sedley's⁴⁵ view of Lucretius as a 'fundamentalist' (even more so since Lucretius' diagnosis hardly differs from the one he attributes to Epicurus; 6,9–23).⁴⁶

There is, however, something more to be said. The reader of *De rerum natura* ultimately has to face the paradox that exactly this radicalisation is quite often closely connected with Lucretius' own Roman world and with the concrete political climate of his day. How does one explain these many references to Lucretius' own contemporary environment? Partly, the explanation can be found in his project of translation, which necessarily implies a transformation. To give but one example, a term like *ambitio* (5,1132) can be the Latin translation of the Greek φιλοτιμία, to be sure, but for Roman readers it will have had other connotations which the Greek word did not have and which could have been very important in the light of the contemporary political situation. Partly, the explanation should also be sought in Lucretius' project of *Seelenheilung*, which implied that he had to take the convictions and concerns of his patient into account.⁴⁷ However, neither explanation suffices to explain fully the above mentioned paradox, as neither suffices to explain the precise relevance of Lucretius' own environment. Indeed, the above analysis has shown that concrete references to the contemporary political situation more than once play a meaningful part within Lucretius' Epicurean argument. Perhaps it was even that these references precisely led to his radicalisation. It is tempting to conclude that one here cuts to the *fait primitif* of Lucretius' thinking, i.e. his enthusiastic observation that Epicurus' *aurea dicta* have lost nothing of their value but are equally valid—with even less exceptions—in the changed world of the Roman Republic. If this is true, the ultimate explanation of both Lucretius'

⁴⁵ (1998a), esp. 62–93.

⁴⁶ Sedley's view has been questioned by C. Lévy (1999). The discussion mainly focuses on the place of Stoic doctrine in *De rerum natura*; Stoic philosophy has often been regarded as one of the targets of Lucretius; see, e.g., P. Grimal (1957b); Z.M. Packman (1975/6); K. Kleve (1978) and J. Schmidt (1990); this view has been rejected, however, by D.J. Furley (1966); cf. Id. (1978), 4, and D. Clay (1983a), 25.

⁴⁷ Cf. J.H. Nichols (1976), 44: "The particular salience and vehemence of Lucretius' denigration of political ambition may well be dictated in part by Memmius' personal character and aspirations."

radicalisation and of his repeated references to contemporary circumstances can be found in his enthusiastic and absolute conviction of the truth of Epicurus' philosophy.

4.1.3. *Living unnoticed? Lucretius' ultimate ambitions*

Lucretius proved to be very critical towards the pursuit of political power and fame. He perfectly knew that a great reputation implied many troubles and in the end failed to procure perfect security. He also knew that fame among people is only temporary, for monuments fall to pieces under the influence of time (5,311) or are struck by lightning (6,242). The conclusion seems evident that Lucretius' Epicurean position implies a rejection of all fame (and not just political fame) as empty and vain.

Quite remarkably, however, there are two passages in *De rerum natura* where Lucretius explicitly expresses his own desire for fame. In the so-called second proem of book one, he admits that "a great hope of renown has struck his heart with the sharp wand" (1,922–923: *sed acri percussit thyrsos laudis spes magna meum cor*). Near the beginning of book 6, he expresses the hope that "he may win the crown with conspicuous praise" (6,95: *ut insigni capiam cum laude coronam*).⁴⁸ Both passages can be found in a context where Lucretius deals with his own work as a poet. Now other poets, too, are considered famous in *De rerum natura*. Ennius, for instance, obtained a crown and a famous name (1,117–119) and the fame of Homer (1,124) and Empedocles (1,729) likewise lasts for centuries. Apart from poets, there is of course in the first place Epicurus himself, whose fame even reaches the sky (6,7–8; cf. 3,10).

With his pursuit of fame, Lucretius apparently wants to emulate his illustrious predecessors. However, his (unnecessary and unnatural) desire is far from unproblematic in an Epicurean perspective. For even if it may in the end be reconciled with the doctrine of the mortality of the soul,⁴⁹ it appears to be radically opposed to the maxim *λάθε βιώσας*. C. Segal tries to elucidate Lucretius' position by distinguishing between his personality as a philosopher, on the one hand, and that of

⁴⁸ The imagery of the poet as a charioteer is traditional; see A.A.R. Henderson (1970); cf. also D. Clay (1983a), 253–255 on the significant parallels between Lucretius and Empedocles.

⁴⁹ On the problem, see P.H. Schrijvers (1970), 79–81; C. Segal (1989) and (1990), 180–186; M.J. Edwards (1993).

poet, on the other hand. As a philosopher, Lucretius strives for virtue whereas his pursuit of fame is rather a matter for Lucretius the poet. In the end, both aspects cannot be reconciled: “to be a great poet means, ultimately, to be less of an Epicurean”.⁵⁰

First of all, such a dichotomy generally fails to do justice to Lucretius. Lucretius was neither a philosopher who turned poet because of the philosophical advantage he could derive from it, nor a poet who converted to Epicureanism in order to obtain a high subject for his poetry. From the very beginning, the philosopher and the poet are two aspects of his personality. Moreover, the passage from book 1 clearly shows that Lucretius’ claim to fame has both a philosophical and a poetical basis. In other words, he does not merely aim at fame as a poet but also as an (Epicurean) philosopher: as a philosopher because he teaches high topics and frees one from superstition (1,931–932), as a poet because he succeeds in explaining his obscure subject matter so clearly (933–934). How closely these two aspects are intertwined further appears from the famous image of the honey on the cup (935–950), which shows that beautiful poetry has great psychagogical advantages and is as such philosophically relevant. The fame which Lucretius claims, then, is based on two interconnected pillars, and pulling down one of them immediately entails the collapse of the whole construction.

Even if this conclusion appears to follow logically from the analysis of the passage under discussion and has the advantage of doing justice to both aspects of Lucretius’ personality, it remains in a certain sense rather surprising, since it directly connects his pursuit of fame with his convictions as an (Epicurean) philosopher. Now it is true that his hope for fame can be reconciled with many aspects of Epicurus’ doctrine. Just as Epicurus could advise to strive for the crown of ἀταραξία (Plutarch, *Adv. Colot.* 1125C = fr. 556 Us.), Lucretius could pursue the crown of being an Epicurean poet. His ambition was not directed towards politics, but towards a domain where it was less problematic from an Epicurean point of view. Furthermore, his striving for fame implies hard work, to be sure, but these efforts contain a certain amount of pleasure as well (2,730 and 3,419).⁵¹ Finally, his pursuit of a great reputation can in principle even be reconciled with a sequestered life (as it often requires the solitude of nocturnal reflection; 1,142).

⁵⁰ (1989), 202.

⁵¹ Cf. M.R. Gale (2000), 152–153.

Nevertheless, even if Lucretius' position appears to be reconcilable to a certain extent with the spirit of the maxim *λάτρε βιώσας*, it, of course, remains radically opposed to the letter of the maxim. On the other hand, it may shed new light on a striking fragment from Metrodorus discussed earlier (fr. 43 K.; *supra*, 3.2.2). According to Metrodorus, Epicureans can be sure of gaining a great reputation (*magnum paratumque nomen*). Even if these words had in the first place a psychagogical purpose, Lucretius' striving for fame provides them with a new dimension. For indeed, along with his poetry, his Epicureanism forms the basis on which his claim to fame rests.

In that sense, time has done justice to Lucretius. Hardly anything is known from his life⁵² and he certainly did not wish to receive a great reputation for remarkable political achievement. The only fame of which he dreamed was that of being an Epicurean poet. We do not know whether he could already enjoy this fame during his own life, but at a moment when he had long been disintegrated into atoms, he in any case fully received it.

4.2. *Philodemus*

4.2.1. *Introduction*

a) If Epicurus bore a name that perfectly suited his own philosophy,⁵³ the name of Philodemus requires a lot of qualifications in an Epicurean perspective. In one of his charming epigrams, he himself interpreted his name as a reference to the fact that he fell in love with no less than four girls named Demo (*epigr.* 10). No doubt his feelings for the people were far less warm. He probably despised the *profanum vulgus* no less than almost all of the Greek philosophers. In any case, he is convinced that the Epicurean sage looks down upon everybody else, including wealthy citizens and influential politicians (*De dis I*, col. xxv, 28–35). Moreover, Philodemus did not associate himself with ordinary Romans, but fre-

⁵² A. Gerlo (1956) has even denied his existence, but his bold hypothesis has been widely—and rightly—disapproved.

⁵³ B. Frischer (1983), 260, suggests that Epicurus may have “changed his *nomen* to make it symbolically more expressive of his *omen*” (cf. Id. (1982), 275–276). If that is true, Epicurus was not the first one to do so; cf. D. Sedley (1998b), 145–146 on Plato's name change.

quented the aristocratic circle of Piso.⁵⁴ He knew many members of the upper-class in Rome and could observe from a privileged position the political troubles of the Late Republic.

During his *otium* at Piso's luxurious villa, Philodemus composed a voluminous and various oeuvre. The fragments which still survive offer interesting information on the intellectual life that existed in different Epicurean circles at that time. It is very important to note, indeed, that the perspective of nearly all of Philodemus' writings is that of the school. In this perspective, crucial importance is given to loyalty to Epicurus, both in theory and in practice (cf. *De lib. dic.* fr. 45,7–10). Philodemus' main purpose is not to develop new insights, but to interpret Epicurus' view correctly. This purpose implies its own methodology: one should pursue a methodically correct understanding of the writings of the important masters (Πρὸς τοὺς—, col. vii, 13–16), which requires precision (col. xi, 1–2 and xvi, 13–15) and a thorough familiarity with the details of Epicurus' view (col. iv, 10–13).

The question remains whether this is the only perspective from which Philodemus' works should be understood. It has often been argued that Philodemus wished to introduce his Epicurean philosophy into Rome.⁵⁵ Now such proselytism is not necessarily incompatible with the pursuit of a correct insight into Epicurus' philosophy, but one could wonder whether it is also in line with the spirit of the Epicurean advice λάθε βιώσας. In my view, it is not, but I also regard it as rather unlikely that Philodemus had such proselytising ambitions. First of all, several of his works derive their *raison d'être* directly from polemic against members of his own school.⁵⁶ They often presuppose a certain familiarity with the technical aspects of Epicurean philosophy, and sometimes deal with detailed questions about specific passages from Epicurus' works (e.g. *Rhet. II* [*PHerc.* 1672], col. x, 21 – col. xx, 27 L.A.), which would hardly arouse the interest of broader circles of Roman readers. Furthermore, it is not surprising that by far the greatest part of the examples which Philodemus provides are Greek.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Asconius calls him *Epicureus illa aetate nobilissimus*; *Pis.* 68 (p. 16,12–13 Cl.).

⁵⁵ See, e.g., E. Asmis (1990), 2371; M. Erler (1992a) and (1994a), 338; M. Gigante (1995), 24.

⁵⁶ His *Rhetorica*, for instance, is written against Epicureans at Cos and Rhodes, who challenged the view of his teacher Zeno; in his *De ira*, he opposes Nicasirates and Timasagoras; examples can easily be multiplied; cf. also F. Longo Auricchio – A. Tepedino Guerra (1981).

⁵⁷ Even if he occasionally deals with the Roman world too; see M. Gigante (1988).

Even his historiographical works are probably esoteric, intended as an introductory course for Epicurean students rather than for a broader reading public.⁵⁸ And even if Philodemus managed to exert direct influence on later Roman authors—which is far from certain—, this does not prove anything about his own intentions.⁵⁹ It was his own sincere conviction that the philosopher prefers to share his insights with only a few persons.⁶⁰ It is much more likely, then, that his look was directed inwards, to the circle of his own friends, and beyond that to the world of his own school.

b) If this is true, one could expect that Philodemus fully endorsed the Epicurean doctrine of an unnoticed life. Momigliano regards Philodemus as a “professional teacher of *Λάθε βιώσας*”,⁶¹ although he adds that “his escape from political passions was narrow and incomplete”.⁶² Admiration prevents me from treating Momigliano as *adversaire privilégié*, but allows me to use his position for the second time as the point of departure for a more detailed analysis.

This analysis will focus in the first place on Philodemus’ *Rhetorica*. This is a difficult work, not so much because of the complexity of its content but because of the fragmentary condition in which it has come down to us.⁶³ Often, we merely have disconnected fragments without any context. It is thus not always easy to determine what can be regarded as Philodemus’ own arguments and what should rather be understood as objections to that position, tenets of Philodemus’ opponents or quotations from the works of Epicurean authorities. More than once, the reader encounters apparent inconsistencies which would probably have been easy to explain if we had the complete text. The

⁵⁸ *Contra* M. Gigante (1995), 23.

⁵⁹ Cf. T. Maslowski (1978), 222: “Philodemus did not fight for and win converts. It was the Romans who came, marvelled at the erudition of the Greek philosopher, and took from him whatever suited them best.”

⁶⁰ *Rhet.* I, 238, col. viii, 8–12 S.; Philodemus also attacked the proselytism of the Stoics; cf. *De Stoic.* col. xxi, 7–13, with the commentary of T. Dorandi (1982b), 127.

⁶¹ (1941), 154.

⁶² (1941), 156.

⁶³ The general structure of the work, and the attribution of the many fragments to the different books, is still far from clear. Certain is the attribution of *PHerc.* 1427 to Book I, *PHerc.* 1674 and 1672 to Book II, *PHerc.* 1426 and 1506 to Book III and *PHerc.* 1423 and 1007/1673 to Book IV; *PHerc.* 832/1015 should probably be attributed to Book VIII. The attribution of the other fragments remains uncertain. An interesting attempt has been made by T. Dorandi (1990a), but his conclusions have been questioned to a certain extent by F. Longo Auricchio (1997).

meaning and scope of other passages likewise depends on the context, which however is lacking. It is clear, then, that the evidence of Philodemus' *Rhetorica* should be interpreted with more than usual caution. On several points, however, it can be completed by fragments from other works.

4.2.2. *The autonomy of politics...*

a) An important *Leitmotiv* in Philodemus' *Rhetorica* is the fundamental distinction between sophistic or epideictic rhetoric on the one hand, and forensic and deliberative rhetoric, on the other hand. Philodemus considers the first to be an art, but he strictly circumscribes its domain and possibilities. Again and again, he underlines that the sophist *as sophist* is unable to contribute anything to politics. The second kind of rhetoric, on the other hand, is not regarded as an art. Besides these two branches of rhetoric, philosophy occupies its own domain, superior to both sophistic and political rhetoric (*Rhet. IV* [*PHerc.* 1007/1673], I, 211, col. xxix^a, 20–212, col. xxx^a, 19 S.). This basic distinction, which is consistently maintained throughout the work, has several particularly interesting consequences.

First of all, politics in Philodemus' view is autonomous. It has its own domain, with its own characteristic activities. Philodemus mentions the following activities of the politician: leading the state, giving advice, serving as envoy, being experienced in such things as laws and decrees (*Rhet. III*, col. x^a, 1–6 Ham.), and administering the state (col. xi^a, 17–24 Ham.). The politician also has his own task (serving the interest of his state),⁶⁴ which presupposes specific qualifications: apart from natural talents, especially training (col. vii^a, 23–30 Ham.) and a certain experience in, and practical knowledge of, political affairs.⁶⁵ On the basis of this characterisation, Philodemus can give a more precise answer to the question who the politician actually is: he is neither the private citizen, nor the philosopher, nor the panegyric orator, but the orator who is engaged in real combats or the man who is not an orator but has acquired political skill (col. ix^a, 5–21 Ham.).

⁶⁴ See *Rhet. III*, col. xl, 21–23 Ham.; cf. *Rhet. IV* [*PHerc.* 1007/1673], I, 212, col. xxxi^a, 15–213, col. xxxii^a, 2 S. and *Rhet. II*, 283, fr. 1 S.

⁶⁵ *Rhet. II* [*PHerc.* 1674], col. xxxvi, 7–23 L.A. and *II* [*PHerc.* 1672], col. xxi, 36 – col. xxii, 5 L.A.; cf. also *II* [*PHerc.* 1674], col. xx, 20 – col. xxi, 11 L.A.; *VIII*, I, 284, col. iii, 2–13 S. Accordingly, politics should be classified among those occupations that have a παρατηρητὸν εἶδος (*Rhet. II* [*PHerc.* 1674], col. xliii, 7–8 L.A.).

This clear definition gives the political domain its own autonomy. As a direct result, politics and the politicians can be evaluated on the basis of their own standards and should no longer be forced into the strait-jacket of a philosophical point of view. This has several very important implications. For indeed, this view enables Philodemus to approach the subject of politics in an open-minded and sober way and to recognise without any problem the positive aspects of the political life without immediately contradicting his own philosophical preference for a sequestered life. Furthermore, it probably contributed to his credibility among the politicians themselves, since he managed to deal with their own behaviour without a philosophical *a priori*. Finally, it also conditions his polemics against other philosophers. Indeed, Philodemus vehemently attacks those philosophers who somehow fail to take into account the autonomy of the political domain.

A case in point is Diogenes of Babylon, who defends the typically Stoic position where politics and philosophy are inextricably connected. According to Diogenes, the Stoic sage has all of the following qualities: being a good dialectician, grammarian, poet, orator, etc., and knowing what is useful to all cities (*Rhet.* II, 211, col. viii, 9–17 S. = *SVF* 3, Diog. 117). Accordingly, he will exercise all kinds of political offices (II, 211, col. viii, 21–212, col. viii, 29 S.). This absolute claim is perfectly in line with the orthodox Stoic tenet that only the sage is able to be a magistrate.⁶⁶ The implication of this view, of course, is that politics no longer has its own autonomy. A politician, despite his experience, can only be successful if he is also a philosopher, a conclusion which Diogenes confidently defends (*Rhet.* II, 226, col. xxi, 15–19 S. = *SVF* 3, Diog. 125).

Moreover, Diogenes' radical Stoic perspective has far-reaching consequences for the evaluation of the concrete political life. If it is only the Stoic sage that is a good statesman, and if it is only the Stoa that produces good citizens (II, 227, col. xxi, 28–30 S. = *SVF* 3, Diog. 125), then the great majority of politicians is bad. Diogenes attempts to demonstrate this position with several arguments. In his view, political orators merely curry favour with the people and distribute public money in an irresponsible way (II, 208, col. vi, 9–16 S. = *SVF* 3, Diog. 115). Not one

⁶⁶ See, e.g., Diog. Laert. 7,122 = *SVF* 3,612; cf. Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2,7,11ⁱ (p. 102.11–19 W.) = *SVF* 3,615. See also D. Obbink – P.A. Vander Waerdt (1991), who add that Diogenes laid his own accents, in that he tried to make the orthodox Stoic doctrine more suitable for practical use in actual political regimes.

of them has served the interest of his country as an envoy (II, 224, col. xviii, 29–32 S. = *SVF* 3, Diog. 124), nor was any one of them a good citizen (II, 225, col. xix, 30–31 S. = *SVF* 3, Diog. 124). In short, they were nearly all miserable and no one was good, civilised and patriotic (II, 225, col. xx, 15–18 S.).⁶⁷

It is clear that Diogenes' evaluation of the actual political situation is strongly conditioned by his philosophical view. The rigid distinction between good and bad, typical of Stoic philosophy, forms the point of departure of his discussion. This, of course, makes all of the politician's accomplishments worthless right from the start. Philodemus' reply is based on a consistent disconnection of the domains of politics and philosophy. In his view, many orators and private citizens have become political orators without philosophy (II, 225, col. xx, 10–15 S.). The emphatic repetition of the phrase *χωρίς φιλοσοφίας* makes Philodemus' point particularly clear. Furthermore, he shows against Diogenes that philosophy alone does not suffice to make a good politician. Even rhetoric can serve the politician well (II, 212, col. ix, 1–213, col. ix, 30 S.; cf. II, 217, col. xiii, 22–29 S.). The domain of politics is clearly given its own autonomy with its own requirements.

This position also enables Philodemus to defend the politician against the attacks of Diogenes. While recognising that some of them are indeed bad, he claims that many have provided excellent advice and have frankly opposed their wicked colleagues (II, 209, col. vi, 19–28 S.). There have been countless political orators who acted as envoy for the benefit of their country (II, 224, col. xix, 9–20 S.) and there are far more good citizens than Diogenes believes. Indeed, in line with his Stoic position, Diogenes cannot but argue that even Pericles, who studied with philosophers but not with Stoics (II, 226, col. xxi, 20–227, col. xxi, 28 S.), was not even a tolerable citizen. As a good polemicist, Philodemus perfectly knew that a *reductio ad absurdum*, concluded by a short rhetorical question (if not even Pericles, then who?; II, 227, col. xxii, 4–8 S.), is more convincing than an elaborate theoretical discussion.

The whole passage gives us a very interesting and, to say the least, quite remarkable picture of an Epicurean philosopher who fervently

⁶⁷ Examples of wickedness that were discussed in Diogenes' works include both individuals (such as Phocus, the son of Phocion; Athenaeus, 4,168e–169a = *SVF* 3, Diog. 52) and peoples (such as the Colophonians; Athenaeus, 12,526a–d = *SVF* 3, Diog. 53).

defends politicians against the attacks of a Stoic. Many would perhaps expect just the opposite. Yet, Philodemus' arguments are perfectly in line with the general position he defends in his *Rhetorica*. By ascribing autonomy to the domain of politics, he can approach political history (as well as contemporary politics) in an unbiased way. This enables him to claim explicitly—and no doubt correctly—that history will bear him out (II, 209, col. vi, 28–30 S.). He also criticises Diogenes for his lack of precision (II, 228, col. xxiii, 15 = *SVF* 3, Diog. 126), since his Stoic presentation is at odds with real life; in Plutarch's terms, he adjusts the facts to fit his theory rather than *vice versa* (*De prof. in virt.* 75F). Philodemus' own analysis is much closer to political reality⁶⁸ and he can be confident that his position is that of *common sense*: few indeed would deny that Pericles was a tolerably good citizen...⁶⁹

The question remains, however, whether Philodemus' position is completely in line with that of Epicurus. The latter attacked statesmen more than once, showing that they foolishly suffered unnecessary πόνοϛ⁷⁰ and even that they were worthless and wicked. When on occasion he defended them, this defence was based on strictly Epicurean arguments, namely, a rational *calculus* of pleasure and pain (cf. *supra*, 2.3.2.1a). The tone of Philodemus' argument is radically different. It is true that his argument is basically in line with the Epicurean philosophy of law,⁷¹ but I think that the most important explanation of this positive evaluation of the politicians is to be sought in two other elements. First of all in its polemical context: Diogenes' extreme attack on the politicians almost naturally leads to Philodemus' vigorous defence. Secondly, it is possible that Philodemus also bears in mind the aristocratic circles which he frequents. A philosophical position which ascribes autonomy to politics and evaluates it on the basis of its own standards is more *salonfähig* in Piso's villa than vehement attacks on influential statesmen and is no doubt less offensive to C. Vibius Pansa, the addressee of the work.⁷²

⁶⁸ Unlike the Stoics, Philodemus did not pursue an ideal state; cf. his attack on the *Republic* of Zeno and on that of Diogenes in *De Stoic.* col. ix, 1 – xxi, 18.

⁶⁹ But cf. Plato, *Grg.* 515c–516d; contrast Aristotle, *EN* 6, 1140b7–10.

⁷⁰ Contrast Philodemus, *Rhet.* II, 205, col. iii, 17–207, col. iv, 32 S., where the politician's πόνοϛ does not appear to have the same negative connotations.

⁷¹ R. Müller (1984), 479, and M. Erler (1994a), 340.

⁷² On the addressee of Philodemus' *Rhetorica*, see T. Dorandi (1996).

b) Yet, the fact that Philodemus grants the political domain its own autonomy does not imply that his evaluation of politics is completely positive. On the contrary, entering the political field has several significant drawbacks. First of all, one should of course recall the main thesis of the *Rhetorica*, that political rhetoric is not an art (not even a τέχνη στοχαστική; cf. *Rhet. II* [*PHerc.* 1674], col. xxvii, 8–19 L.A.), since it lacks a methodical and established transmission of knowledge (*ibid.* 4–8). This observation already robs the politician of a great deal of glory. He may be skilled and experienced, but he can never claim that he can fall back on an art. If he manages to convince his audience through his speech, this success is merely a matter of practical experience.

Moreover, his success is far from certain. Indeed, he has to take into account the capriciousness of the multitude,⁷³ which makes the outcome of his political project often uncertain. Again, such sober analysis remains closely in touch with the daily realities of political life. Many a pragmatic politician will no doubt have endorsed Philodemus' view, rather than the more abstract view of Diogenes, even if (or rather: because?) Philodemus' analysis also brings politics more down to earth.

4.2.3. ... and of philosophy

4.2.3.1. Similarly to politics, philosophy has its own domain with its own aim (that is, happiness)⁷⁴ and its own approach.⁷⁵ The world of the philosopher is not that of the politician. Moreover, the philosopher should stay in his own world. Philodemus often explicitly states that the philosopher should not participate in politics.⁷⁶ His sincere (though qualified) appreciation of the politician should not be misleading on this

⁷³ *Rhet. VIII*, II, 17, col. xxiii, 18–19 S.; cf. *Rhet. IV* [*PHerc.* 1007/1673], I, 209, col. xxviii^a, 13–210, col. xxviii^a, 17 S.

⁷⁴ *Rhet. I*, 270, col. xxxii, 32–37 S.; *Rhet. VIII*, II, 31, col. xxxv, 4–12 and 32, fr. 21, 7–10 S. In *De elect.* col. xiii, 6–7, it is said that philosophy alone enables one to act rightly.

⁷⁵ The philosopher uses tight argumentation (*Rhet. VIII*, II, 30, fr. 20, 13–31, col. xxxv, 3 S.; cf. *Rhet. I*, 378, col. cii, 5–14 S.). Accordingly, the philosopher's discourse differs from that of the sophists and the politicians in being true, free of strife and unconfused (*De oecon.* col. xxiii, 30–36).

⁷⁶ See, e.g., *Rhet. VIII*, II, 35, col. xxxviii, 8–12 S.; *De Epic.* [*PHerc.* 1232], col. xxviii, 12–15 T.G.; cf. *Rhet. VIII*, II, 46, col. xlv, 19 – fr. 33, 1 S. (although Sudhaus' text reconstruction remains rather hypothetical); *Rhet. I*, 234, col. iv, 17–19 S.; II, 298, fr. iii S.; *De lib. dic.* col. 1b, 5–6; cf. also *Rhet.*, *PHerc.* 463, fr. 13 (published by F. Longo Auricchio (1982), 73; see also Ead. (2004), 37–39).

point. Philodemus clearly endorses the orthodox Epicurean view and provides various, often traditional, arguments to support his position.

a) A first—traditional—argument is derived from the problem of ἀσφάλεια. In recognising the importance of personal security for happiness (cf. *Rhet.* I, 263, col. xxvii, 34–35 S.), Philodemus closely follows his master Epicurus. The latter distinguished between ἀσφάλεια ἐξ ἀνθρώπων and ἀσφάλεια ἐξ ἡσυχίας, giving preference to the second alternative. That Philodemus adopts a similar position appears from two at first sight conflicting passages.

On the one hand, he argues that the philosopher is far from safe. Taking as his point of departure Aristotle's saying that "a hare cannot be saved among dogs", he states that in the same way, someone who adopts a despicable attitude cannot be safe among men. And as philosophers in every way appear like this, they turn out to be easy prey to sycophants or enemies (*Rhet.* II, 175, fr. xv, 1–10 S.). Elsewhere in the same work, however, he argues that sages and philosophers are not hated by all men (II, 162, fr. xxvii, 7–11 S.). The opposition between these two passages should be traced back to the opposition between the two ways of attaining security. The first passage concerns ἀσφάλεια ἐξ ἀνθρώπων. If Philodemus there tries to demonstrate that a philosopher is not safe among men (ἐν ἀνθρώποις), his argument clearly implies that security which comes from other people is usually beyond the reach of this philosopher. The second passage, on the other hand, concerns ἀσφάλεια ἐξ ἡσυχίας. Philodemus directly connects the philosopher's situation with his living in rest, justice and tried friendship (II, 162, fr. xxvii, 11–14 S.). The security which the philosopher enjoys turns out to derive from his sequestered life among friends. Whereas ἀσφάλεια ἐξ ἀνθρώπων appears to be hard to attain, ἀσφάλεια ἐξ ἡσυχίας is close at hand.

Moreover, such a sequestered life proves advantageous even when one is brought to trial, for there, ἡσυχία and moral virtue contribute most to success (*Rhet.* II, 140, fr. xi, 12–15 S.). This passage may cast further doubt on the anecdote regarding Philodemus' expulsion from Himera.⁷⁷ Given the great importance of consistency between words

⁷⁷ When Himera was infested by plague and famine, the citizens would have banished Philodemus because they were convinced that his 'atheistic' doctrines had brought down the wrath of the gods on their city (see esp. *Suda* IV, 559.7–8). This

and deeds in ancient philosophy,⁷⁸ one might wonder whether Philodemus would have emphasised the powers of ἡσυχία and καλοκάγαθία if he himself had previously been unable to defend himself successfully.⁷⁹

However this may be, a sequestered life is not merely helpful for winning a trial, but also for preventing it. This appears from the example of Epicurus himself. In *De pietate*, Philodemus mentions the following argument of Epicurus' opponents: Epicurus escaped from the Athenians not through his piety, but merely because his philosophy escaped the notice of many people (col. 49,9–19). This objection can be understood in two different ways. Either the opponents made intelligent use of Epicurus' own doctrine λάθε βιώσας, connecting it with the common sense conviction that only criminals wish to remain unnoticed. Epicurus wanted his philosophy to escape the notice of his contemporaries in order to avoid trials. On the basis of this interpretation, this passage offers an additional—though biased—testimonium regarding Epicurus' active application of his own advice to 'live unnoticed'.⁸⁰ On the other hand, the argument of the opponents may also suggest that Epicurus' philosophy was just too trivial to attract attention. Then the fact that he remained unnoticed is not the result of his own intentions but merely of his insignificance.

In his reply, Philodemus begins by underlining that Epicurus had been harmful to no one (col. 51,20–24; 53,1–8 and 54,4–13) and that, in opposition to other philosophers who fell victim to their people and became prey of the writers of comedy, Epicurus succeeded in protecting himself and his followers (col. 53,8–28). In the case of the argument that he remained unknown to the people (τοῖς ἀνθρώποις οὐκ ἐγινώσκετο), it precisely shows that neither he nor his pupils harmed their fellow-citizens, and that they never had to face a trial (col. 54,13–27). Philodemus thus agrees on the link between remaining unnoticed and remaining free from persecution, but interprets it in a completely

anecdote is given some credit in D. Sider (1997), 9–10; M. Erler (1994a), 290 is even more cautious.

⁷⁸ Much evidence in J. Mansfeld (1994), 177–191.

⁷⁹ Cf. also *De morte* col. xxxiv, 4–9.

⁸⁰ Cf. also D. Obbink (1996), 538: "The opponents' charge may also have been a criticism of the Epicurean doctrine of λάθε βιώσας and the failure / refusal of prominent Epicureans to take an active role in political affairs". I would not regard the opponents' argument as a direct attack against the doctrine of λάθε βιώσας, but rather as a misrepresentation of the doctrine in order to use it as an argument against Epicurus himself.

different way. He actually stands the argument of his opponents on its head: it was not because Epicurus remained unnoticed that he was never brought to trial, but it was because he was not brought to trial (being harmless to everybody) that he remained unnoticed. In any case, Epicurus' unnoticed life, based on his consequent avoidance to harm others, shows that he primarily aimed at ἀσφάλεια ἐξ ἡσυχίας.

The previous analysis has shown that Philodemus, like Epicurus, regarded a sequestered life as the best way to reach security. Nevertheless, Epicurus also considered political power (*RS* 6) and fame (*RS* 7) to be at least possible means of attaining this security, though they are not preferable. There is one passage in Philodemus which appears to point in the same direction:

- 1 καιων λόγος ἥρει κακὰ τη-
 λικαῦθ' ὑπομένειν ἐκτίν[ειν]
 εἴνεκα τῶν περιστάλων αἰ-
 σθήσε[ων· ἥ] δόξα τοίνυν χάριν ἀσ-
 5 φαλείας ἐδιώχθη κατὰ φύ-
 σιν, ἣν ἔξεστιν ἔχειν καὶ ἰδι-
 ώτηι καὶ φιλοσόφωι, κακία[
]υπασης, ἐν αἷς ἡ κολακεία
 [πρ]ωτα[γ]ωνι[στ]εῖ καὶ μεί[ζο-
 10 ν]ά [γ'] ἀδοξ[ί]αν αἰ[κ]ῇ π[ε]ριτίθ[η]-
 σιν ὅταν ἐ[ν]δοξίαν ἀποτελ[εῖ]-
 ν προσδοκᾶται.

(*De adul.* [*PHerc.* 222], col. iv, 1–12 Garg.)

“... the argument proved that [they] endured to suffer such great miseries for the sake of the perceptions of great imbeciles. Well then, fame was pursued in accordance with nature for the sake of security, and both the ordinary man and the philosopher can have it. Vice[...], among which flattery takes the lead, and confers more shameful ill repute whenever one expects that it will produce good repute.”

1. 3–4 αἰσθήσεων: *conieci*; αἰ[.]ησει[.]. Gargiulo, who prefers αἰρέσεων. In his view (see (1981), 116–117), “αἰσθησις creerebbe la difficoltà di essere applicato ad un ambito, quello etico, cui è solitamente estraneo”. I do not see the problem.

1. 7–8 κακία[...]υπασης; Gargiulo proposes to read κακία[ς | δ' ο]ὐ πάσης, and interprets the following relative clause as a *constructio ad sensum*; see (1981), 117. Even if his interpretation makes sense with regard to the content, the grammatical construction remains very awkward.

In M. Erler's view, this passage is opposed to the orthodox Epicurean position and shows an influence of the Roman ideal of *gloria*.⁸¹ This is

⁸¹ (1992a), 195–198, and (1992b), 315–317; cf. Id. (1994a), 319.

a very interesting interpretation, though it is difficult to find explicit indications which may support it. The problem with this passage, as with so many in Philodemus' works, is that its precise meaning can only be understood against the background of its surrounding context, which is no longer extant. I propose a reading which differs from that of Erler, while realising that many aspects of my own interpretation remain hypothetical too.

In the first sentence of the passage, it is said that the argument shows that certain persons are prepared to suffer such great misery for the sake of the perception of great imbeciles. Significant words which may give a clue for the meaning of the phrase are *τηλικαῦτα* (apparently, it is important to emphasise the *magnitude* of the misery) and *περισάλων* (it is relevant that the perception is that of *great imbeciles*). The general tenor of the argument appears to be: such a great deal of efforts for nothing. Since it is presented as a conclusion of the previous discussion (cf. *λόγος ἦτοι*), one could perhaps infer that this *λόγος* is that of Philodemus himself and that the behaviour he describes is that of the flatterer, who takes great pains in order to be noticed by imbeciles.

The second sentence then introduces the thesis that fame can be pursued in order to reach security, both by a private citizen as well as by a philosopher. It is clear, I think, that this is basically in line with Epicurus' own view in *RS* 7.⁸² It is far less clear, however, what the relevance of the reference to this precise doctrine might be in the context of this passage. At least two possibilities may be discerned. Either Philodemus specifies himself to what extent fame can be pursued, recalling the orthodox Epicurean position in order to qualify the view he himself developed earlier. Or else he answers an objection of the flatterers, who claimed that their behaviour aims at the natural end of security. If this is true, the passage is not merely a specification of Philodemus' own position, but at the same time a correction of that of his opponents. In both cases, however, it should be understood as an echo of the orthodox Epicurean doctrine and thus shows no influence of the Roman ideal of *gloria*.

In the last sentence of this short fragment, Philodemus argues that flattery is a poor way to reach fame. It usually even leads to the opposite

⁸² Note the aorist *ἐδιώχθη*: according to T. Gargiulo (1981), 117, this should be understood as a gnomic aorist; in *RS* 7, however, the tense refers to the past. Probably both connotations are present in *ἐδιώχθη*.

and thus, one might infer, harms one rather than contributes to one's security. Even if fame can in principle be regarded as a road to security, this possibility is not open to the flatterer.

Nevertheless, it is not the road which Philodemus himself prefers. More than one passage in his œuvre shows that he is quite suspicious of the pursuit of fame as a means to achieve security. He argues both that the Epicurean philosopher, contrary to ordinary people, does not regard offices, power, and subjugation of other peoples as good means to the final end (*Rhet.* I, 254, col. xxi, 3–255, col. xxi, 10 S.) and that one should not give in to φιλοτιμία and δοξοκοπία,⁸³ which are stimulated by rhetoric rather than by philosophy (*Rhet.* II, 290, fr. xiv, 4–11 S.).

Moreover, great ambition has both pragmatic and philosophical disadvantages. Indeed, as soon as the people grant honour to a politician, they become envious of him, being convinced that he fails to make an adequate return. Consequently, from a pragmatic point of view, it is much better to receive nothing at all or just a small favour.⁸⁴ Again, it becomes clear that φιλοτιμία does not necessarily contribute to one's security. Usually, it harms more than it helps. In a philosophical perspective, too, ambition proves quite harmful, interfering as it does with the salutary working of παρρησία. Indeed, δοξοκοπία prevents one to listen to useful words (*De lib. dic.* col. xviii b, 1–3; cf. col. xxiii a, 10–11 on the conduct of women) and once a person has gained an honourable position, he does not, or only with difficulty, endure frankness (col. xxii b, 10–13). This holds for students who have distinguished themselves (col. xviii b, 6–13), kings (col. xxiii b, 12 – col. xxiv a, 7) and old men (col. xxiv a, 7 – col. xxiv b, 12). Ambition, in short, is a disease in the moral perspective of *Seelenheilung* and is thus presented in very negative terms in Philodemus' *De libertate dicendi*.⁸⁵

Closely connected to the problem of security is the argument from political failure. More than once, Philodemus underlines the great misfortunes politicians suffered as a direct result of their political career. They were tortured or executed, often for strange and even very

⁸³ See *Rhet.* VIII, I, 288, col. x, 1–7 S.; *De lib. dic.* col. ib, 2–5; *De oecon.* col. iv, 14–15 (a paraphrase of Xenophon, *Oec.* 1,22–23); col. xxii, 24–26; col. xxiii, 32–36. Philodemus also wrote a work *Περὶ τῆς φιλοδοξίας*; cf. M. Erler (1994a), 321.

⁸⁴ *Rhet.* II, 154, fr. xii, 5–15 S.; compare Plutarch's position in *Praec. ger. reip.* 820A–F; G. Roskam (2004/5), 92–97.

⁸⁵ Cf. M. Gigante (1995), 24 on the Epicurean perspective of *De lib. dic.*: "It is a model for the community that develops itself freely and constructs a life free from ambitions".

insignificant reasons.⁸⁶ He even claims that most statesmen (οἱ πλείστοι τῶν πολιτευσαμένων) were slaughtered like cattle or, even worse, falling victim to the people's hatred (*Rhet.* I, 234, col. v, 6–235, col. v, 15 S.). Philodemus' comparison with the slaughtering of cattle should not merely be regarded as a rhetorical hyperbole, for it also adds much to the efficacy of his argument. It is a particularly suggestive way to unmask high political ideals. Indeed, the outcome of such dreams contains nothing honourable any longer. Whoever still cherishes great ideals about receiving crowns or statues should realise that the political reality and the future it promises is usually far less rosy.

That this is true also appears from historical examples. Philodemus refers to the unhappy fate of politicians such as Themistocles, Alcibiades and Callistratus (II, 147, fr. iv, 28–38 S.). More importantly, however, not only does the fate of such illustrious statesmen serve as an illustration of this argument, but even a philosopher like Socrates, who never engaged in politics but still did not opt for a sequestered life, turns out to support this view of politics. Socrates, always among the crowds, offended many people and incurred political enmities, which led to hatred and thus ultimately to his trial and death (*De piet.* col. 59,2–18). The example of Socrates is particularly relevant to the philosopher, of course, and also implies a certain radicalisation. For it shows that the philosopher should not merely avoid participating in politics, but even abandon public life all together. Again, the choice for ἡσυχία, far away from the troubles of public life, proves to be the best guarantee for security and thus happiness.

Two other mutually related arguments should persuade the philosopher to keep away from political life. On the one hand, philosophers can hardly contribute anything to the political domain. They are neither able to speak in public⁸⁷ nor to benefit their city and they have never written any law (*Rhet.* I, 383, col. cx, 2–7 S.). Again, Philodemus' argument is probably based on the autonomy of both domains.

⁸⁶ *Rhet.* I, 234, col. iv, 8–15 S.; II, 147, fr. iv, 4–17 S. and II, 151, fr. viii, 16–23 S.; cf. *De morte* col. xxxv, 1–5.

⁸⁷ *Rhet.* II, 289, fr. xiii S. Philodemus perhaps mentioned the famous example of Xenocrates, who served as an envoy but failed to persuade Antipater; *Rhet.* II, 173, fr. xii, 5–10 S.; cf. I, 350, col. iv, 1–16 S. and *PHerc.* 453, fr. iv (not in Sudhaus, published by W. Crönert (1906), 67); *Hist. Acad.* col. vii, 22 – col. viii, 17. The anecdote is also mentioned in Plutarch, *Phoc.* 27,1–2; discussion in A. Wörle (1981), 39–43, and T. Dorandi (1991), 44–45.

Since political life has its own requirements, the political project of a philosopher who acts as *philosopher* is doomed to failure.

On the other hand, politics cannot contribute to philosophy either. It even proves to be particularly harmful to philosophical ends. Indeed, a philosopher who deals with kings or with the people will find it difficult to maintain his independence (I, 226, fr. II, 8–12 S. and I, 238, col. VIII, 14–17 S.). More importantly, politics appears to be the worst enemy of true friendship, since it is dominated by envy, ambition, and discord (*Rhet.* II, 158, fr. XIX, 6–159, fr. XIX, 22 S.). This is an interesting argument, which illustrates the gap that existed between Philodemus' Epicurean philosophy and the political world of his day. In the perspective of contemporary Roman politics, indeed, the word *amicus* could be used in a very broad sense.⁸⁸ Philodemus, on the other hand, is obviously thinking of typically Epicurean friendship. Such a friendship can only flourish in an apolitical environment, since it presupposes intimacy.⁸⁹ One should note that Philodemus' argument has implications as well for his own attitude towards Piso. Gigante is probably right in regarding the relation between them as an example of true friendship.⁹⁰ This implies that Philodemus did not want to be merely one of Piso's political *amici*, but one of his true Epicurean friends and thus that their friendship did not rest on a political basis.

b) It has become clear that Philodemus often tried to illustrate his position through concrete examples taken from political history. At the same time, however, he took care to place his arguments into a philosophical perspective as well, not merely by connecting them, whenever he could, with the authority of the founders of his school, but also by attacking philosophical opponents who encouraged the philosopher to engage in politics.

Accordingly, he attacked Nausiphanes' thesis that *φυσιολογία* forms the best basis for practising rhetoric and participating in political life. In Philodemus' view, a natural philosopher is unable to take into account the opinions of his audience (*Rhet.* VIII, II, 14, fr. II, 6–8 S.) and the style of his speech is not adapted to his purpose and thus proves inferior, in this particular domain, to that of the politician (II, 27, fr. 18, 3–28, col. XXXIII, 15 S.). Furthermore, as a result of his ignorance of political

⁸⁸ See Q. Cicero, *Pet.* 16; cf. Cicero, *Att.* 1, 18, 1 and Seneca, *epist.* 3, 1.

⁸⁹ Cf. E. Asmis (1990), 2395, n. 60 (on *De lib. dic.* fr. 28, 3–10).

⁹⁰ (1995), 79–80.

affairs and his lack of experience, he will provide poor advice, which will even further undermine his credibility and persuasiveness (II, 8, fr. 6, 10–12 S. and II, 15, col. XXI, 13–22 S.).

It is clear that Philodemus' polemical attack on Nausiphanes is entirely based on the autonomy he attributes to both philosophy and politics, which presuppose different talents and approaches. Hence, it is not surprising that in his philosophical polemic, Philodemus again refers to the concrete practice of political life. For such references enable him to present Nausiphanes' view as being at odds with real life, and at the same time indirectly support the exactness of his own appeal to widespread common sense convictions (I, 288, col. x, 11–289, col. x, 17 S.).

Aristotle, too, is criticised by Philodemus. His well-known statement that "it is shameful to keep silent and allow Isocrates to speak" (II, 50, fr. 36, 3–5 S.) is connected somehow or other with three arguments in favour of taking part in political life. First of all, anyone unacquainted with political affairs will be deprived of friendship (II, 51, fr. 37, 1–3 S.). Secondly, philosophy can make much progress if it encounters a good government (*ibid.* 3–6 S.). Thirdly, Aristotle was displeased with the mutual rivalry between most of the contemporary politicians (*ibid.* 7–12).

In his reply, Philodemus first offers elaborate arguments against Aristotle's *dictum*.⁹¹ He next turns to the three arguments concerning political engagement. Regarding the first one, it applies to Aristotle himself, rather than being an argument against sequestered philosophers such as Philodemus, for Aristotle himself proved unable to make friends or maintain friendships (II, 62, col. LVII, 1–63, col. LVII, 11 S.). It is clear that Philodemus' argument is merely *ad hominem*. At the same time, by underlining Aristotle's complete lack of friendship, it also strongly disqualifies him from an Epicurean perspective. One should note that Philodemus could also have regarded Aristotle's friendless condition as a direct result of the latter's focus on politics, given the Epicurean doctrine that politics is the greatest enemy of friendship (*Rhet.* II, 158, fr. XIX, 6–159, fr. XIX, 22 S.; cf. *supra*, 4.2.3.1a, *sub fin.*). That he did not elaborate this argument, but merely confined himself to an attack *ad hominem*, throws light upon the scope and aim of his polemic.

⁹¹ These arguments need not detain us here; good discussions can be found in S. Sudhaus (1893b) and T. Dorandi (1994).

Apparently, Philodemus in this context was not interested in developing lengthy arguments in order to reach a nuanced position. His sole purpose was to refute Aristotle and he chose the easiest as well as the most efficient means to reach this goal.

This conclusion gains further support from the analysis of Philodemus' reply to Aristotle's second argument: philosophy did not prevent Aristotle himself from making progress (*Rhet. VIII, II*, 63, col. LVII, 11–16 S.). Once again, Philodemus' argument is *ad hominem* and thus fails to go into more detail, in spite of the fact that Aristotle's point is important from an Epicurean perspective as well. For Epicurus too attached great importance to the political stability and rest which a political system could offer. Of course, Epicurus and Aristotle came to radically different conclusions, but they nevertheless started from the same observation. While it might have been interesting to discuss the differences between an Aristotelian and an Epicurean point of view more in detail, Philodemus prefers to close the debate immediately after having opened it. Again, the refutation of Aristotle is more important than the elaboration of his own position.

One should mention in passing, however, that Philodemus' second *argumentum ad hominem* does not merely lead to an easy attack on Aristotle, but that it also has an interesting implication, suggesting as it does that one can even be happy under a bad government.⁹² This implication is important for an evaluation of the theory of the Epicurean's 'emergency action', and I'll return to it later (cf. *infra* 4.2.4a).

4.2.3.2. Epicurus and his followers as a rule took care to complement their destructive arguments regarding the many negative consequences that taking part in politics entail with a positive presentation of their own alternative. In this respect, Philodemus' *De oeconomia* is a particularly interesting source. The treatise does not thematise the pleasures of the Epicurean *otium* as such, but offers a great deal of information regarding the sources from which the philosopher may acquire the money he needs to enjoy these pleasures and thus illustrates one of the concrete necessary conditions of Epicurean *otium*, namely, its material or financial requirements.

⁹² As philosophy has a certain ἀντάρξεια; *Rhet. VIII, II*, 63, col. LVII, 16–22 S. (though uncertain text reconstruction). Unfortunately, the papyrus breaks off when Philodemus turns to Aristotle's third argument. Sudhaus' reconstruction is too hypothetical to base many conclusions on it.

After a polemical section directed against Xenophon and Theophrastus (col. I, 1 – col. XII, 2),⁹³ Philodemus indicates the precise subject matter of his treatise. He does not propose to discuss the question of how to live an honourable life in a house, but instead how to behave with regard to the acquisition and preservation of money (col. XII, 5–9). One should note that this determination of the subject matter fits in very well with an Epicurean perspective. The high ethical ideal (with its possible political connotations) expressed in the phrase ἐν οἴκῳ καλῶς βιοῦν is replaced by a much more down-to-earth approach which focuses on how the philosopher (col. XII, 15–17) should earn his money. From the very beginning, the discussion is thus orientated in a direction that better suits the Epicurean point of view.

This is followed by a long section in which Philodemus develops quite abstract reflections on the basis of an argument of Metrodorus⁹⁴ regarding the correct attitude towards limited natural wealth (col. XII, 25 – col. XXII, 5). The passage nicely illustrates the hedonistic *calculus*. After some general arguments the discussion becomes more concrete. Philodemus distinguishes between several sources of income. An income “won by the spear” (δορίζτητον) is rejected, for it is fitting for politicians and practical men rather than for sequestered philosophers (col. XXII, 17 – col. XXIII, 1). Horsemanship, metallurgy, and farming with one’s own hands are rejected as well (col. XXIII, 1–9).

Three sources of income are approved, however. In Philodemus’ order, the second best way to earn money is that of a landowner who has the work done by others, which enables him to avoid unpleasant affairs and to enjoy the pleasures of a leisured and sequestered life among friends (col. XXIII, 9–18). It is clear that this alternative implies many important positive aspects of the ideal Epicurean way of life. Philodemus refers both to its pleasures (διαγωγὴν ἐπιτεροπῇ) and to the *otium*⁹⁵ of the sequestered life (ἀναχώρησιν εὖσυχολον), which is further qualified by the important addition μετὰ φίλων: the landowner’s retreat

⁹³ On Philodemus’ *De oeconomia*, see esp. R. Laurenti (1973); short discussions can also be found in E. Asmis (1990), 2385–2390 and M. Erler (1994a), 319–320.

⁹⁴ See S. Sudhaus (1906) and R. Laurenti (1973), 108–109, who both regard the whole section (col. XII, 45 – col. XXI, 35) as a verbatim quotation from Metrodorus’ Περὶ πλούτου. I think it is more likely that Philodemus does not offer one continuous quotation, but sometimes paraphrases Metrodorus’ views or inserts personal observations.

⁹⁵ The landowner’s *otium* is free from πόνοι because he does not have to work himself. Contrast Musonius Rufus, fr. 11 (57.3–63.6 H.), who defends a radically different ideal.

is not asocial, but presupposes the company of friends. Finally, the term εὖσχημονεστάτην introduces the typically Epicurean concern for a good reputation which guarantees that one is not despised by others (cf. Diog. Laert. 10,120 = fr. 573 Us.; *supra*, 2.3.2.2a).

The third best way to earn an income is to acquire it through a tenement or through slaves or persons exercising reputable arts (col. xxiii, 18–22; cf. col. xxvi, 28–33). Philodemus does not further explain this alternative, but it is clear that it basically enables one to enjoy the same advantages as the landowner. Here too the addition μηδαμῶς ἀπρεπεῖς takes into account the importance of one's reputation. Social *decorum* should be respected at least to a certain extent.

But the best way is to earn one's income through one's philosophical discourses, following the example of Epicurus himself (col. xxiii, 23–36). Quite remarkably, Philodemus here omits financial terms such as πορισμός or τήρησις and instead uses εὐχάριστον and σεβασμός. These, of course, imply financial support as well, but this financial component is embedded in a much richer whole. The sage does not merely receive money, but gratitude and recognition. This gives an extra dimension to the pleasures of his sequestered *otium* which he shares with his friends.

In what follows, Philodemus adds several important specifications: the acquisition and preservation of money should take into account the basic insights of Epicurean philosophy (col. xxiii, 36 – col. xxiv, 11), presupposing justice (col. xxiv, 11–19), friendship, and virtues such as humanity and generosity without fixed calculations (col. xxiv, 19 – col. xxvii, 12).

De oeconomia thus offers an important complement to Philodemus' arguments against participation in political life. Even if Philodemus explicitly takes the concrete question of the philosopher's acquisition and preservation of money as his point of departure, his treatment always has direct implications for one's whole way of life. As a result, the treatise provides a very interesting and concrete picture of different ways in which the Epicurean alternative of a sequestered *otium* can be realised.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ E. Asmis (1990), 2389 rightly remarks that Philodemus' reflections do not only take into account his own position (as a philosopher), but can also apply to Piso (as a landowner).

4.2.4. *The interaction of two separate worlds*

The foregoing analysis has made Philodemus' view on the precise relation between philosophy and politics sufficiently clear. On the basis of the arguments discussed above the philosopher will in principle abstain from politics. There are two questions, however, which still remain open. Both concern different aspects of the interaction between the Epicurean philosopher and the state.

a) First of all, Epicurus recognised that the philosopher should occasionally enter political life *si quid intervenerit* (Seneca, *dial.* 8,3,2 = fr. 9 Us.). As I argued in the second chapter, Epicurus' proviso referred to particular contingencies that could harm (a member of) the school, rather than to extreme political emergency situations (cf. *supra*, 2.3.2.1d). Although Philodemus never alludes to this doctrine of his master, there are two passages in his work that support my interpretation. I have already discussed the first one when dealing with Philodemus' criticism of Aristotle (*supra*, 4.2.3.1b). There Philodemus suggested that it is possible to live happily even under a bad government. This implies at least that not every bad government necessarily incites the Epicurean philosopher to political action.

The second passage is to be found in his *Rhetorica* as well, where he states that one should observe even laws that are arbitrarily made, or else if one is convinced that one is unable to live well under these laws, one has to leave that place (ἢ μεταβαίνειν ἐκ τῶν τόπων, ἐὰν μὴ καλῶς ζῆν οἴωνται; I, 259, col. xxiv, 33–39 S.). This makes the theory of emergency actions even less convincing. Philodemus does not demand from the philosopher to change the laws (which requires great efforts and the success of which is far from certain). His solution is much more Epicurean: just leave the country and enjoy the pleasures of your happy life elsewhere.⁹⁷ No doubt such migration will entail pains too,⁹⁸ but presumably, a sober *calculus* of pleasure and pain will show that

⁹⁷ It is not impossible that Philodemus followed this advice himself and that he fled from Gadara because of the political troubles which the city experienced. This hypothesis (for which compelling evidence is lacking) is accepted by M. Gigante (1988), 156–157, and T. Dorandi (1990b), 2330, n. 2; cf. also M. Erler (1994a), 290, and M. Gigante (1995), 68.

⁹⁸ Epicurus himself, in any case, had the reputation of being a real patriot; see Diog. Laert. 10,10. One might recall also Philodemus' reflections on dying in a foreign country; *De morte*, col. xxv, 37 – col. xxvi, 17.

the pains required for a change of the political constitution are much greater.⁹⁹ Even extreme political circumstances, then, do not suffice for the Epicurean to abandon his sequestered life.

b) The second question that still remains open runs as follows: does the Epicurean philosopher, if he abstains from politics, benefit his country? First of all, one should note that this is basically a non-Epicurean question. The Epicureans were generally much more concerned with the benefits they could derive from their country than with those they could themselves bestow on it and in any case, they were convinced of the primacy of individual over social ethics. In Philodemus' own words, it is better to care for oneself than for the ordinary multitude (*Rhet.* II, 157, fr. xvii, 3–8 S.). Nonetheless, Philodemus more than once feels the need to underline that even the Epicurean philosopher benefits his country. Epicurus himself was far from inactive towards the city (*De piet.* col. 56,4–5)¹⁰⁰ and the same holds for other Epicureans too. They can actually be useful to the state in two different ways.

First of all, Philodemus states that the philosophers, even if they do not engage in politics, greatly benefit their country by teaching the young to always obey the laws, which are made for the sake of their own safety (*Rhet.* II, 155, fr. xiii, 9–19 S.). This is in line with the well-known appreciation of legislation in Epicurean philosophy. On this point, the Epicureans even claimed that they could offer more to the state than any other philosophical school.¹⁰¹

Secondly, the philosopher can act as adviser to the politician. The precise role which he can play in such a context is not immediately clear, however, as Philodemus' position at first sight seems to be rather inconsistent. On the one hand, he explicitly states that philosophy does not perfect politicians (μηδὲ ἀποτελεῖν πολιτικούς τὴν φιλοσοφίαν; *Rhet.* III, col. xi^a, 32 – col. xii^a, 3 Ham.). On the other hand, he argues that

⁹⁹ In line with this position, L. Piso declared that he would depart from Italy if Antony destroyed the republic; see Cicero, *Phil.* 12,14.

¹⁰⁰ According to D. Obbink (1996), 540, οὐκ ἀπραγμόνως amounts to πολυπραγμόνως. I am not sure whether this is indeed true. Perhaps, Philodemus' argument (explicitly or implicitly) counters the attack of philosophical opponents that the Epicurean doctrine leads to absence of all activity (cf., e.g., Plutarch, *Non posse* 1100C; *De lat. viv.* 1129A and D; 1130E).

¹⁰¹ Cf. Colotes, ap. Plut., *Adv. Colot.* 1124D, with R. Westman (1955), 85–86. For Philodemus' appreciation of the laws, see also *De piet.* col. 48,12–20; *Rhet.* VIII, II, 33, col. xxxvii, 3–34, col. xxxvii, 7 S.; cf. *Rhet.* I, 259, col. xxiv, 33–260, col. xxv, 11 S.

philosophers help politicians out of their troubles and thus gain their friendship (*Rhet.* II, 133, fr. IV, 19–134, fr. IV, 23 S.; cf. I, 350, col. LVI, 5–351, col. LVI, 17 S.). This apparent inconsistency, however, quickly disappears if both passages are placed back into their broader context. The first passage is to be found in a context where Philodemus deals with a demarcation of the different domains of rhetoric, politics, and philosophy. In such a context, the autonomy that should be ascribed to each domain is very important. This explains the use of the term ἀποτελεῖν: philosophy could perhaps help the politician, but will never suffice to make a complete politician out of him. For indeed, a politician requires other talents as well, which philosophy is incapable of providing. This insight is important for a correct interpretation of the philosopher's role as a counsellor. Although he can give advice to the politician, he can never make the absolute claim of being the only person to whom the latter should pay attention.

The second passage should be placed in its own context as well. There Philodemus underlines the opposition between orators, who harm many people and incur the enmity of rulers, and philosophers, who are useful to politicians and gain their friendship. The positive characterisation of the relation between philosopher and politician is thus strongly conditioned by the opposition to its negative counterpart. The question remains, however, what should be understood by the vague phrase ἐκ κακῶν μεταστήσαντες (*Rhet.* II, 133, fr. IV, 19–20 S.). What can philosophers give to the politicians? In which way will their advice free them from their troubles? I think the phrase—unless Sudhaus' text reconstruction is wrong—can only be understood in a broad way: the philosopher does not help the politician out of concrete troubles by giving specific advice that is directly useful in a given political situation, but rather gives general moral advice which may free the politician from his moral troubles (his irrational fears and unlimited desires) and which may (but need not) contribute indirectly to his political success. This interpretation is based on two arguments.

The first can be found at the end of the third book of Philodemus' *Rhetorica*. There, Philodemus argues that it will be advantageous for the politician's city—though not necessarily for himself—that he is virtuous (col. XIV^a, 30 – col. XV^a, 8 Ham.) and thus agrees that a good statesman should have many virtues (col. XV^a, 8–16 Ham.). This implies that a politician should be acquainted with philosophy in order to become really good (col. XV^a, 16–21 Ham.) and that philosophy brings about an extremely great difference towards the better by dealing with a politi-

cal disposition in general, and by giving more specific advice suitable for political administration (col. xv^a, 22–31 Ham.: φιλοσοφία καὶ κοινῶς προστεθεῖσα πολιτικῇ διαθέσει καὶ κατὰ μέρος ὑποθήκας προσεχεῖς τῇ πολιτικῇ διοικήσει παραδοῦσα διαφορὰν οὐρανομήκη ποιήσει πρὸς τὸ κρεῖττον). This is a very interesting passage for two reasons. First of all, it throws new light on the autonomy of politics. For indeed, moral demands now appear to creep into the domain of politics, being one aspect that is required for the good politician. It is clear that the importance of these moral demands does not necessarily *abolish* the autonomy of politics, but rather *refines* it. Politics and philosophy are not two diametrically opposed domains without any connection, but politics turns out to presuppose certain qualities which in turn presuppose philosophy. Accordingly, when the politician turns to the philosopher, he does so *as a politician* and thus retains his autonomy as a politician. Secondly, the passage clarifies what benefit the politician can derive from philosophy, namely, moral improvement. Somewhat paradoxically, however, it remains rather unclear about what the philosopher himself gives to the politician. According to Philodemus, the philosopher should give general and even specific advice which suits political administration. How should this be understood and how does it fit in with the moral advice which the politician wishes to receive from the philosopher?

This brings us to the second argument, which is to be found in Philodemus' treatise *De bono rege secundum Homerum*. This work indeed forms the best illustration of the kind of advice Philodemus has in mind in *Rhet. III*, col. xv^a, 22–31 Ham. First of all, his own advice has a strong moral flavour. The king should give evidence of mildness, reasonableness, royal gentleness and harmony of disposition (col. xxiv, 11–15), a well-balanced combination of mildness and strictness (col. xxv, 12–16), reasonableness and righteousness (col. xxx, 26–27), wisdom (col. xxxii, 10–37) and good counsel (col. xxxiii, 11 – col. xxxiv, 37). In that sense, important sections of the work deal with the ideal qualities of a political disposition in general. On the other hand, the treatise also contains more specific advice, for instance concerning the ruler's behaviour at a symposium and in his leisure time (col. xvi, 14 – col. xxiv, 6) or concerning his conduct during wars (col. xxv, 19 – col. xxvi, 40). It is very interesting to see how Philodemus in such cases tries to take into account the autonomy of the political domain. Particularly significant in this respect is the introductory phrase εἰ δὲ τῷ φιλοσόφῳ πρόπει at the beginning of his discussion of matters of war (col. xxv, 19–20). These words reveal a certain caution which appears to be based

on the insight that the philosopher lacks at least part of the knowledge that is necessary to give advice on this topic. It is reasonable to infer that in such cases, Philodemus does not claim to speak the final word. Moreover, there is another way in which his advice in *De bono rege* takes into account the autonomy of politics. More than once, he takes care that his advice is adapted to the specific needs of the ruler. It is clear, of course, that he will not recommend in this context the Epicurean ideal of an ‘unnoticed life’ with the implications it entails. Instead, he pays attention to several elements that are unimportant for the Epicurean philosopher but which may suit the ruler. A good king, for instance, should be a lover of victory (φιλόνικος; col. xxvii, 14; hardly a quality of the Epicurean sage), he needs a certain corporeal beauty (col. xxxvii, 2 – col. xxxviii, 36) and he does not give material profits (κέρδος) as a reward, but honour (τιμή) (col. xxvi, 31–33).

Philodemus’ *De bono rege* thus illustrates the way in which the philosopher should advise politicians. It contains general and more specific advice which can be useful in a political context. It never shows, however, how the ideal should be realised in the concrete political circumstances of the moment. On that point, the philosopher has nothing to say (cf. *Rhet.* I, 328, fr. xi, 6–16 S.). This requires proper talents which the politician should have *as a politician* and for which he has no need of the philosopher’s advice.

This reading of *De bono rege* has two important implications. First of all, it makes unlikely Grimal’s thesis that the treatise was written to support Caesar and against Antony.¹⁰² Philodemus’ advice always remains on a more general level¹⁰³ and Murray correctly notes that “there is little in the extant part which could have direct application to the actual situation at any time, still less to the difficult predicament in which Caesar had placed himself”.¹⁰⁴ Secondly, it casts doubt on the current view that *De bono rege* is a *Fremdkörper* in Philodemus’ œuvre.¹⁰⁵ For it shows that the context of Philodemus’ political advice

¹⁰² (1966); cf. Id. (1978), 240–241, and (1986), 265–269.

¹⁰³ It cannot be excluded though that on this general level, it indirectly influenced contemporary political thinking; cf. G. Zecchini (1998), 149–151.

¹⁰⁴ (1965), 177; cf. also 181. His own view, however, which places the work in the literary context of the sympotic genre (see (1965), 191, repeated in (1984), 159) likewise fails to convince me.

¹⁰⁵ See, e.g., O. Murray (1965), 163; Id. (1984), 157; P. Grimal (1966), 277; T. Dorandi (1990b), 2335; M. Erler (1994a), 296.

in this treatise and the way in which it is presented are both perfectly in line with the position which he develops in his *Rhetorica*.

It is clear that Philodemus' interpretation of the precise relation between philosopher and politician, as it appears from his *Rhetorica* and his *De bono rege*, leads to a win-win situation. Both the philosopher and the politician retain their own autonomy and their collaboration serves the interests of both. The politician receives additional advice that contributes to his political goal, whereas the philosopher can be sure that the state will offer the political peace and stability (cf. *De bono rege* col. xxvii, 13 – col. xxix, 31) that he needs to enjoy the pleasures of his *otium* during the rest of his life, until his last hour.

4.2.5. *Living unnoticed in the face of death?*

Indeed, according to Epicurus, the philosopher should not merely live unnoticed, but also die unnoticed. Especially on his last day, he should not trouble his life with the pursuit of unlimited desires, but should continue to pursue pleasure as much as possible before dying quietly in the company of friends. His death, in short, should be the consistent conclusion of his whole life (cf. *supra*, 2.3.2.3). That Philodemus basically adopts the same view appears from the fourth book of his *De morte*, where he critically examines several irrational fears and wrong opinions concerning death and the right way to die. One of them is the popular conviction that it is better to die while accomplishing great deeds which remain famous among later generations (col. xxvii, 35 – col. xxviii, 5; cf. Homer, *Il.* 22,304–305).¹⁰⁶ It is clear that such a view, which considers death in bed to be unworthy (*ἀνάξιος*), is diametrically opposed to the Epicurean advice of *λάθῃ ἀποβιώσας*. Philodemus raises three objections against it.

First of all, it is based on wrong assumptions concerning what happens after death, presupposing as it does an afterlife where heroes such as Achilles are more honoured than people who simply die in bed. This irrational view is rejected by a reference to the doctrine of *ἀναισθησία*, a great *Leitmotiv* in *De morte* (col. xxviii, 5–14). Philodemus thus begins by unmasking what he deems the crucial driving force behind this popular opinion. The irrational belief in an afterlife is immediately countered by the rational Epicurean point of view. In that way, this first

¹⁰⁶ This is one of the many passages where Philodemus refers to a passage in Homer as the starting point for an *interpretatio medicans*; see on this M. Erler (1997) and (2006).

argument both undermines the foundations of the opposed conviction and introduces the general perspective in which the remaining part of the discussion should be placed.

For indeed, the doctrine of ἀναισθησία directly leads to the second argument, since it offers a new criterion to evaluate the causes of death. The criterion is not the heroic or ordinary character of such causes, but only the degree of pain they entail before death (col. xxviii, 14–20). It is only on the basis of the latter distinction that the way in which one dies should be evaluated. In such a perspective, death in battle can have the advantage of avoiding a long and difficult death agony, but a quiet death in the company of one's friends should not be rejected either, since it is often not more painful than a heroic death (col. xxviii, 20–32). The radical consequences of the first argument are thus further echoed in the second one. If the corpse lacks all sensation, one's attention should only be focused on the quality of life *before death*. This leads to a radical revaluation of the ways to die, based on a careful *calculus* of (pleasure and) pain. It is characteristic of Philodemus' nuanced position that the alternative of a heroic death on the battlefield is not immediately rejected. It can be pursued, but on the basis of rational arguments rather than for the sake of an irrational belief. The same *calculus* also shows, however, that such a death should not necessarily be privileged, since a quiet death among friends turns out not to have more disadvantages. The important combination of δι' ἡσυχίας and παρὰ φίλους presents the latter death as a consistent continuation of the Epicurean way of life. It is probably along these lines that one can find the closest reference to what should be regarded as Philodemus' own ideal.

After having introduced the general Epicurean perspective with the first two arguments, Philodemus explicitly returns to the element of a great achievement that remains famous among later generations. This explicit reference leads to a third objection, which itself consists of three cumulative observations. Philodemus begins by recalling once again the doctrine of ἀναισθησία: the corpse that lacks all sensation is not moved by (posthumous) fame (col. xxviii, 32–36). Furthermore, only few people meet an heroic death, for most perish like slaughtered sheep (col. xxviii, 36 – col. xxix, 2). The striking image of the slaughtered sheep recalls what is said about the politician's miserable fate (in *Rhet.* I, 234, col. v, 6–235, col. v, 15 S.) and can also be connected with Philodemus' thesis, expressed somewhat further in *De morte* (col. xxxiii, 15–23), that the accomplishment of a man who is killed in a sea battle is neither

smaller nor less famous in terms of posterity¹⁰⁷ than that of a soldier who fell at Plataeae, but that the former runs even more risks of falling prey to birds or dogs. Although the latter passage makes the picture even more horrible and repellent, replacing imagery by matters of fact, the three passages basically show the same argumentative technique. Great ideals are unmasked through a more down-to-earth approach and a sober analysis of real life. Everyone who dreams about brilliant accomplishments and an illustrious death should realise that he runs a great risk of being slaughtered like a beast and falling prey to scavengers. Finally, Philodemus refers to the example of renowned statesmen like Themistocles and Pericles as well as famous philosophers like Epicurus and Metrodorus, who all died in bed, and contrasts their fame with the obscurity of countless soldiers who bravely died on the battlefield (col. xxix, 2–15). It is clear that all of these examples bring about a disconnection between posthumous fame and an heroic death, since they show that the latter is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the former. At the same time, they once again illustrate Philodemus' open-minded interpretation and accurate use of well-known historical examples in order to support his own view.

Philodemus' discussion leads to the conclusion that it is one and the same attitude which is required for a good death on one's sickbed and at the battlefield (col. xxix, 15–18). This disposition, which takes into account the insights of Epicurean philosophy, should be pursued by the readers of the book. Indeed, it is important to note that the whole book should be interpreted from a perspective of *Seelenheilung*.¹⁰⁸ Its psychagogic purpose determines the structure of Philodemus' whole argumentation in this passage, as well as the content and character of the individual arguments. Furthermore, it explains why so little attention has been given to a positive presentation of the Epicurean alternative of an unnoticed death. In this section, Philodemus merely wishes to cure his readers of their wrong opinions. In other words, the scope of the passage is merely *elenctic*. Of course it is not unreasonable to suppose that the positive ideal was discussed in other books of *De morte* that are no longer extant. A good *Seelenheilung* should not be confined to an

¹⁰⁷ The phrase ἥττον τι ῥέζουσι καὶ ἔσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι (col. xxxiii, 19–20) clearly refers back to the beginning of our passage (col. xxviii, 3–4).

¹⁰⁸ A point which is correctly made by V. Tsouna (2001a), 256–258; see also F.M. Schroeder (2004), 142–143, who shows that a great deal of Philodemus' argumentation in *De morte* is based on the technique of *avocatio*.

elenctic approach, but should take advantage of the appealing force of the better alternative. However, far too many assumptions (and even conclusions!) have already been made on what might have been written in works now lost to us. One had better focus on what we still have, certainly if this points to rather unambiguous conclusions. Indeed, both the whole argument against the pursuit of a heroic death and the short but clear reference to a quiet death among friends (col. xxviii, 28–29; cf. also col. xxvii, 1–8) sufficiently show that Philodemus, with full conviction, made the advice of λάθε ἀποβιώσας his own.

4.2.6. *Conclusion*

It is safe to claim that Philodemus' political thinking is broadly in line with that of his master Epicurus. He usually argues, on the basis of traditional arguments, that the philosopher should, as a rule, abstain from politics and from any action that is motivated by unlimited ambition and that he should instead enjoy until his last hours the pleasures of his sequestered life in the confined circle of like-minded friends.

It is interesting to return briefly, by way of conclusion, to the question whether Philodemus' traditional position also shows some influence from the political situation of his own day or from his own social and intellectual environment. I think M. Erler's positive answer to this question, at least as far as Philodemus' thinking on ambition is concerned, is in the end doomed to remain a hypothesis—even if an interesting one—(cf. *supra*, 4.2.3.1a), but it is true that there are other elements which might more clearly point to a positive answer. Particularly interesting in this context is Philodemus' conception of the autonomy of the political domain and the open-minded appreciation of the politician it entails. It is hard to find many parallels for this position in the fragments of Epicurus, though Philodemus himself never claims to be innovative on this point. On the other hand, it is no less difficult to find passages which explicitly and/or unambiguously connect this position to the contemporary social or political circumstances.

The only way to avoid a *non liquet* on this point is to question the presuppositions of the original question. Did Philodemus wish to carry on a dialogue with his own time? My answer to this question is threefold. First, I think that Philodemus did not find one argument in the concrete political situation of the late Republic persuasive enough to abandon the orthodox Epicurean point of view. Secondly, he neither wished to interact directly with his times nor to contribute to the public

debate, but merely wished to avoid offending other people. Accordingly, he usually takes care to present his position in a way that is acceptable to, and relevant for, his contemporaries,¹⁰⁹ without, however, needing subtle artifices in order to reach this end. Finally, his primary purpose no doubt lay elsewhere, namely, in further examining, arguing, and applying the insights of his master. To that purpose, he wrote his voluminous oeuvre, which is often characterised by a very methodical and well-structured approach and by tight argumentation. Philodemus' friends may have praised him for his great pedagogical talents. In many cases, they will have been perfectly right. His opponents may have blamed him for his pedantry. They were not always wrong. In any case, his attempts to defend and interpret Epicurus' position are always based on rational arguments. Probably his well-known claim that rival Epicureans are almost guilty of parricide (*Rhet. I*, col. vii, 24–29 L.A.) is greatly exaggerated and it should be placed back into a rhetorical and eristic context. Nevertheless, it perfectly illustrates what was Philodemus' first and most important goal: *not* to be a parricide, but an admiring and loving son.

4.3. *Diogenes of Oenoanda*

4.3.1. When turning to the last Epicurean author to be discussed in this chapter, we face a puzzling paradox. When Diogenes of Oenoanda undertook to divulge the message of Epicurus' philosophy in his city through a monumental inscription, he could no doubt foresee that not only this project, but also its author, would attract a great deal of attention in the relatively small provincial town of Oenoanda. His initiative, to say the least, did not directly contribute to the Epicurean ideal of 'living unnoticed'. Seeing that the inscription contained not merely epitomes of physics and ethics, and a treatise on old age, but also several personal letters and documents, one might be inclined to conclude with Clay that "Diogenes was no more concerned with the precept 'Λάτρε βιώσας' than was Epicurus".¹¹⁰ Diogenes indeed more

¹⁰⁹ This is true both for his reflections on the autonomy of politics and for his position in *De oeconomia*. O. Murray has tried to show that Philodemus' discussion in *De bono rege* shows "striking peculiarities in the details of the book, which can best be explained by reference to the contemporary Roman world" (see (1965), 165). His conclusions, however, often have too weak a basis, resting as they do on a rather lacunary text.

¹¹⁰ (1990), 2532.

than once discusses personal matters, informing not only his fellow citizens, but even passers-by and foreigners about his travels to Rhodes (fr. 62, II, 9–14), his contacts with friends (fr. 62, II, 1–8; 63, II, 9 – III, 2; 70, II, 1–8; 122, II, 3–10) and his poor health (fr. 117, 4–8; cf. also 121, II, 2–4). Was this just the mere garrulity of an old man? Or is Diogenes giving in to his unnecessary desire for showing off? It has even been argued recently that the whole inscription should be understood against the background of the so-called ‘Second Sophistic’, and that Diogenes in his own way emulates the virtuoso self-display of famous and influential sophists.¹¹¹ Although such a view fails to do justice to Diogenes,¹¹² one continues to wonder what may have possessed him to conceive his plan for offering such an inscription to his hometown. Would it not have been better for him to have stayed in his own little garden?

Diogenes himself may well have been conscious of this problem. In the introduction to his epitome on physics, which also serves as a general introduction to the whole inscription, he both clarified the reasons for his inscription and his own interpretation of the character and nature of this serious project (τὸ κατεσπουδασμένον; fr. 3, II, 2–3). To begin with the latter, Diogenes is convinced that most of his contemporaries suffer because of their wrong opinions about things (fr. 3, IV, 3–13). As this situation obviously renders face-to-face-advice impossible (fr. 3, III, 5 – IV, 3), he resorts to this inscription as a proper means to address a larger number of people (fr. 3, V, 8 – VI, 2), including future generations and foreigners (3, IV, 13 – V, 8). Diogenes thus places his own inscription in the typically Epicurean perspective of *Seelenheilung*. It should not be regarded as a means to self-promotion but as helpful moral advice to other people, in line with the true spirit of Epicureanism.¹¹³

Although this passage is important for a correct understanding of the inscription as a whole, it hardly solves our problem. For why does Diogenes not confine himself to a few people instead of addressing the great majority? The motivations which are indirectly mentioned in the passage—that is, the feelings of justice (fr. 3, IV, 13) and φιλανθρωπία (fr. 3, V, 5)—are of no great help either, for although it is true that

¹¹¹ P. Gordon (1996).

¹¹² See M.F. Smith (1998).

¹¹³ Cf. the term ἐπιζουρεῖν in fr. 3, V, 7, with the commentary of D. Clay (1989), 319; Id. (1990), 2458 and 2530; M.F. Smith (1993a), 439.

they can be easily reconciled with the Epicurean doctrine of pleasure and thus help in giving the whole project an Epicurean basis, I doubt whether they can be regarded as a satisfactory explanation of Diogenes' decision to make his inscription in order to reach as many people as possible.

The key to the answer to our question rather lies, I believe, in the passage which immediately precedes that cited above, where Diogenes explicitly mentions two reasons for his inscription. This key, however, is damaged by more than fifty per cent. The first reason is no longer extant at this moment¹¹⁴—though an excavation at Oenoanda may yield new discoveries—and of the second, only the final, concluding (cf. οὕτω) part has been preserved:

οὕτω [δ', ὦ]
 πο[λείται], καὶ οὐ πολ[ε]-
 τεύμενος, διὰ τῇ[ς]
 γροφῆς καθάπερ πο[λί]-
 των λέγω ταῦτα, ὡς δὲ [ε]-
 κινεῖν δὲ πειρώμε-
 νος ὡς τὸ τῇ φύσει
 συμφέρον, ὡς ὅπερ ἐσ-
 τὶν ἀταραξία, καὶ ἐνὶ
 καὶ πᾶσι τὸ αὐτὸ ἐσ-
 τιν. ὡς καὶ τὴν δευτέ-
 ραν οὖν ἀποδοὺς αἰ-
 [τί]αν τοῦ συνγράμ-
 ματος, κτλ.
 (fr. 3, I, 3 – II, 2)

"In this way, [citizens,] even though I am not engaging in public affairs, I say these things through the inscription just as if I were taking action, and in an endeavour to prove that what benefits our nature, namely freedom from disturbance, is identical for one and all. And so, having described the second reason for the inscription, etc." (transl. M.F. Smith)

Diogenes thus wanted to show with his inscription that the Epicurean ideal of ἀταραξία is identical for one and all. Especially important in our context is of course his explicit claim to keep out of politics. Commentators usually and rightly point to the well-known testimonia concerning Epicurus' own advice not to participate in political life.¹¹⁵ These parallels, however, do not necessarily show that Diogenes *was* an orthodox Epicurean on this point, only that he *claimed* to be so.

¹¹⁴ M.F. Smith (2000).

¹¹⁵ A. Grilli (1950), 371; C.W. Chilton (1971), 31; M.F. Smith (1993a), 437–438.

This is not without importance. For the above passage raises more than one difficult question. Why did Diogenes wish to demonstrate that his ideal is the same for everyone and—one may presume—that it can in principle be reached by everyone? At first sight, his advice might seem fairly disinterested—at least in the eyes of a non-Epicurean reader. For how can such ‘selfless’ concern for others be reconciled with the Epicurean doctrine that nobody loves another *nisi sua causa* (Lactantius, *inst.* 3,17,42 = fr. 540 Us.)? Secondly, is Diogenes’ claim of οὐ πολειτευόμενος justified? One should note that his inscription was in all probability to be found on the so-called Esplanade, which may even have been the agora in his day.¹¹⁶ This at least presupposes a certain degree of political influence—though not necessarily active political engagement. Of course, we may give him the benefit of the doubt (as I am inclined to do), but even then the question remains how his claim should be understood. In short, can we glance behind the façade of the monumental inscription or at least try to read between its often severely damaged lines?

I propose to deal with these questions under the following three headings:

- How does Diogenes generally think about politics? Does he refer to Epicurus’ traditional arguments against participation in political life and / or does he put forward new ones? Which arguments are mentioned and which are omitted?
- As it has often been argued that Diogenes’ argument more than once takes into account the concrete contemporary circumstances and the current convictions of his day,¹¹⁷ it is interesting to examine whether his claim of οὐ πολειτευόμενος received a more specific meaning and had more specific implications in the concrete political context of his own day. To that purpose, I shall also briefly discuss the positions of Dio of Prusa and Plutarch of Chaeroneia.
- Finally, if Diogenes indeed does not wish to be politically active, why does he still deem it necessary to add the phrase καθάπερ πρᾶττων?¹¹⁸ Is this merely an example of his notorious garrulity?

¹¹⁶ M.F. Smith (1993a), 54 and 56.

¹¹⁷ See, e.g., M.F. Smith (1993a), 126–127 and 139–141, and J. Warren (2000), 147–148; see also D. Clay (1989), 331–335, Id. (2000), 85–89, and P. Gordon (1996), 94–124 on Diogenes’ reaction against widespread superstitious beliefs.

¹¹⁸ One should note that earlier editions offer the reading καθάπερ παρών, which also

4.3.2. As for the first topic, it is interesting to point out that several traditional arguments and qualifications are nowhere mentioned by Diogenes. Now it is dangerous, to be sure, to base far-reaching conclusions on this observation, since our text of Diogenes remains after all very lacunary.¹¹⁹ Nonetheless, it is not unreasonable to assume that most qualifications were omitted, as they required a somewhat more nuanced and circumstantial argumentation which neither takes into account the limited space on the wall, nor the interests of his readers.¹²⁰ If that is true, Diogenes presented his Epicurean message in a far more apodictic and less nuanced way than his master. One should add, though, that such a generalisation, if not implausible, is to a certain extent undermined by Diogenes' quotation of *RS* 6, which forms itself one of the beautiful examples of a more qualifying approach.

Much safer than speculating on what is lost is examining what is still extant. Apart from the emphasis on the importance of a careful *calculus* of pleasures and pains,¹²¹ Diogenes uses two traditional arguments. First, he regards personal independence as (one of) the necessary condition(s) for happiness. This disqualifies both military service (where one is subordinate to others) and rhetoric (which implies a certain degree of dependence as well: the orator's success at least partly depends on his audience) (fr. 112). The radical opposition between such occupations, which are controlled by others, and our own *διάθεσις*, of which we are master, is perfectly in line with the position of Epicurus (cf. *SV* 67) and with that of Lucretius (5, 1133–1134) and Philodemus (*Rhet.* I, 226, fr. 11, 8–12 S. and I, 238, col. VIII, 14–17 S.), who all in different contexts and in their own way underlined the importance of personal independence.

Second, Diogenes repeatedly points to Epicurus' famous distinction between different kinds of desires¹²² and ranges the pursuit of wealth, political fame, kingship, etc. under the category of unnecessary and unnatural desires that fail to contribute anything to happiness (fr. 29,

makes sense. Still, Smith's text reconstruction offers to my mind the most plausible and meaningful reading.

¹¹⁹ According to the calculations of M.F. Smith (1993a), 83, less than a fourth has been preserved.

¹²⁰ M.F. Smith (1993a), 132–133.

¹²¹ Fr. 34, III, 10 – V, 1. One should note, however, that [1] Smith's text reconstruction is extremely hypothetical, and [2] that the fragment only offers a general abstract perspective. No attention is given, neither here nor elsewhere, to the great efforts which a political career presupposes or to the unhappy fate of many famous politicians.

¹²² Fr. 32, VI, 10–13; 34, VII, 4–7; 111, 4–6 and 153, I, 7–14.

II, 4 – III, 3 and *NF* 131,1–6). Such desires are vain (κεναί: fr. 111,6; 153, I, 8 and *NF* 131,1–6), difficult to satisfy (δυσπόριστοι: fr. 2, II, 1 and *NF* 131,6) and dangerous (fr. 2, II, 3–4). In such a context, Alexander is twice mentioned as a negative paradigm (fr. 51, I, 5–12 and *NF* 131,9–11). This is a beautiful example of the typically Epicurean criticism of the idealised picture of famous politicians of the past. By showing that the impressive successes of the Macedonian king did not contribute at all to his happiness, Diogenes tries to neutralise Alexander's attractiveness as an ideal. It is not impossible that Diogenes' choice of Alexander as a negative example is not entirely coincidental. One would wonder indeed whether most of the ordinary citizens at Oenoanda would not be more acquainted with the brilliant achievements of Alexander than with those of, for instance, Lycurgus, Solon, or Epameinondas and thus looked up to the former's life as an admirable, though unattainable, ideal. Diogenes' argument, which unmasks such an unattainable 'ideal' as worthless and vain rather than admirable, shows that he bears in mind the widespread convictions of his readers and may serve as one more illustration of the liberating force of Epicurean philosophy, considering as it does a successful and pleasant life not just the privilege of merely a small number of exceptionally gifted people, but making it available to common people as well.

These negative arguments are counterbalanced by a more positive presentation of Diogenes' own Epicurean ideal. In a remarkable fragment (56, I, 1–12), Diogenes depicts a kind of future 'Golden Age' when the life of the gods will pass to men. At that time, everyone will have attained wisdom, and there will no longer be any need of city-walls or laws, since everything will be full of justice and mutual love (δικαιοσύνης γὰρ ἔσται μεστὰ πάντα καὶ φιλαλληλίας). Everyone will thus be able to enjoy perfect security. It is very interesting to note that Diogenes in this fragment does not oppose ἀσφάλεια ἐξ ἡσυχίας to ἀσφάλεια ἐξ ἀνθρώπων, but rather appears to oppose two different interpretations of ἀσφάλεια, that is, the traditional one based on external compulsion (τειχῶν ἢ νόμων) and a completely new one safeguarded by internal elements.

In the case of Diogenes' utopian belief that all people would be capable of attaining wisdom, Smith rightly underlines that there are no parallels with either Epicurus (cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1,15,67,1 and Diog. Laert. 10,117 = fr. 226 Us.) or later members of the school,¹²³

¹²³ (1993a), 140–141 and 504; *contra* A. Barigazzi (1978), 12.

and Diogenes' words have often been connected with contemporary ideas.¹²⁴ On the other hand, I see absolutely no reason to conclude that the fragment is incompatible with orthodox Epicurean doctrine. However that may be, one should in any case avoid over-emphasising the importance of the passage. We are dealing with a fragment without context¹²⁵—it may well have been an *obiter dictum*—introducing a hypothesis (ὑποθώμεθα) the irreality of which was probably explicitly underlined earlier in the text. In all likelihood, it is safe to conclude that Diogenes was much more concerned with the pleasures of the moment, in the company of like-minded friends,¹²⁶ than with unrealistic dreams for the future (even though the latter undeniably have a certain pro-creptic power).

4.3.3. Leaving the difficult fragment 56 aside, we may conclude that Diogenes' position with regards to politics, albeit somewhat simplified, generally proves to be in line with standard doctrine. This observation shows that Diogenes' claim of οὐ πολειτενόμενος may first of all be motivated by the demand of consistency. It can be regarded as the direct result of his own adherence to the Epicurean point of view, and as he will go on to assure explicitly that he has himself tested the medicines which he offers (fr. 3, VI, 2–4), it can also be interpreted as a way of securing his own credibility as an author.

There is more to be said, however. Diogenes' claim is not merely an expression of his own orthodoxy, but also has a polemical aspect.

¹²⁴ D.N. Sedley (1976b), 218 points to a parallel in the pseudo-Aristotelian letter to Alexander in support of his claim that Diogenes is “simply adapting traditional Epicureanism to the language and spirit of his times”; see also A.A. Long – D.N. Sedley (1987), II, 143: “Diogenes' vision of breaking down existing boundaries [...] could simply reflect the ideology of the Roman empire”; M.F. Smith (1993a), 141; cf. also A. Etienne – D. O'Meara (1996), 19.

¹²⁵ Especially its second part about farming has been badly preserved. It is not surprising that Barigazzi's text reconstruction—in (1978), 15–16, accepted with some intelligent modifications by A. Casanova (1984), 277–279—strongly differs from that of Smith, although the latter is undoubtedly right in rejecting Barigazzi's text on the basis of the punctuation in line 7 (see (1993a), 244). In this context, A. Casanova's general criticism of Smith's bold textual restorations (in (1998), 270–271) proves justified. Smith's reply to this criticism (in (2003), 39–41) is generally well-considered, although in this particular case (as in several others), I would side with Casanova (whose own text reconstruction, it is fair to repeat, is problematic too). In any case, Smith's reconstruction proves to be at odds with Philodemus, *De oecon.* col. xxiii, 7–18 (cf. *supra*, 4.2.3.2), a passage which seems to be much more in line with the Epicurean point of view.

¹²⁶ D. Clay (1989), 328–329; cf. also É. Évrard (1999), 60.

This becomes clear when the inscription is regarded within the broader context of its time. Here, of course, we face the notorious problem of the date of Diogenes' inscription. It has been dated from the first century B.C.¹²⁷ to a period between 220 and 230 A.D.¹²⁸ I am not well placed to formulate apodictic conclusions about this issue, but Smith's arguments in favour of a date near 120 A.D. seem to me the most plausible (and one may add that in his case, his *argumentum ex auctoritate*¹²⁹ is not necessarily a fallacy).

a) At that time, political life in the provincial towns was to an important extent conditioned by the euergetic system.¹³⁰ Rich politicians spent huge sums of money for the public interest, whereas the people showed their gratitude by offering different kinds of honour in return. This tacit pact between wealthy aristocrats and the multitude of ordinary citizens guaranteed the preservation of the local political system and did much to maintain peace and order in the cities.

Fortunately, we are relatively well informed about the activities of several of such influential benefactors in the region of Oenoanda. C. Iulius Demosthenes, for instance, founded in 124 A.D. a great penteteric theatrical festival and competition, the intended course of which is described in great detail on a lengthy inscription which was discovered near Oenoanda.¹³¹ Opramoas of Rhodiapolis gave financial support to various projects in different cities, including a gift of 10,000 *denarii* for baths at Oenoanda (*TAM* 2,3, n° 905, XIX B 27–28). Other cities again were benefited by an anonymous benefactor from Xanthes or by his colleague Iason of Kyaneai.¹³² These wealthy politicians pursued basically the same goal through similar means, although the choice of their gifts was of course partly conditioned by the specific needs of a partic-

¹²⁷ L. Canfora (1992) and (1993); see also the replies of M.F. Smith in (1993b) and (1997), 68–71.

¹²⁸ A.S. Hall (1979), 162–163.

¹²⁹ Most emphatically stated in (1996), 17–18: “it does seem slightly odd that the evidence of one who has devoted a quarter of a century to autopsy of Diogenes' inscription and who is also well acquainted at first hand with the Demostheneia inscription, should be so confidently dismissed by one who has never set eyes on either of them.”

¹³⁰ See, e.g., A.H.M. Jones (1971), 167–168 and 175–176; C.P. Jones (1978), 19–20 and 104–114; H. Pavis d'Escurac (1981), 288–290.

¹³¹ The Greek text with a rich commentary in M. Wörle (1988); an English translation and short discussion in S. Mitchell (1990).

¹³² J.J. Coulton (1987).

ular city. The most popular gifts included all sorts of buildings, festivals, and food assignments; the people reacted with statues or honorary inscriptions and decrees that sang the praises of the great merits of the benefactor.

It has been suggested more than once that Diogenes with his inscription at least indirectly opposes the conduct of these benefactors.¹³³ An even more direct attack can perhaps be found near the beginning of his inscription, where he seems to have argued in a quite explicit way that baths (such as those given by Opramoas) do not contribute to real joy (fr. 2, III, 7–11; the text is badly preserved, but the word *βαλανεία* is secure). In this sense, his gift of an Epicurean inscription, with its emphatical claim of *οὐ πολειτευόμενος*, can be regarded both as a way to underline his own orthodox position and as an attack against the current practices of famous benefactors.

b) Even this conclusion, however, does not yet clarify the full meaning and scope of Diogenes' claim of *οὐ πολειτευόμενος*. There is still a third factor which should be taken into account, and which has been completely neglected by specialists of Diogenes, that is, the contemporary thinking about the euergetic system in other philosophical schools. Smith's dating makes Diogenes a rough contemporary of Dio of Prusa and Plutarch of Chaeroneia. A confrontation between their views and Diogenes' project will throw further light on the latter's position and add a new dimension to the polemical implications of his claim of *οὐ πολειτευόμενος*.

Dio of Prusa attacks both beneficiaries and benefactors.¹³⁴ He severely criticises the people's immoral behaviour during public festivals. Athenians (31,121–122) and Alexandrians (32,32–33, 41–42, 50 and 81) are blamed for their bad conduct, whereas the Rhodians are warmly praised for maintaining their dignity (31,123 and 163). The benefactors, on the other hand, are ridiculed for their self-imposed slavery, since they prove to be entirely dependent on the vain and instable praise of others (66,2–3 and 12–17). Yet Dio nowhere advocates abolishing the euergetic system (cf. 38,2).¹³⁵ He is even prepared to accord a place to public spectacles, provided that the audience behaves in an orderly

¹³³ See, e.g., M.F. Smith (1993a), 52–53; J. Warren (2000), 147–148.

¹³⁴ Cf. also M.-H. Quet (1981), 42–46.

¹³⁵ One may recall that he himself offered a stoa to his hometown; see also C.P. Jones (1978), 104–114 on Dio's own role as a benefactor.

and honourable way (32,45 and 52–53; cf. also 40,30). In this way, he succeeds in reaching a well-considered, though precarious balance, avoiding the collapse of the political system and yet neutralising the possible immoral excrescences of the euergetic system by introducing it into a philosophical perspective.

Plutarch's view is very similar to that of Dio. In his case, we have the additional advantage that Plutarch himself explicitly and in a more systematised way thematises the problem of euergetism in his *Political precepts*. His advice to his young friend Menemachus of Sardes on this matter generally shows the same ambivalence which characterises the position of Dio. Similarly to Dio, he is basically critical of the euergetic system. The gifts often corrupt the people (*Praec. ger. reip.* 802DE) and the honours which benefactors pursue are ephemeral and insecure (821F and 823E), and are opposed to true honour, which does not lie in statues and decrees, but “in the goodwill and disposition of those who remember” (820F).¹³⁶ Moreover, a poor politician does not need such lavish donations in order to achieve his political project (822D–823E). Like Dio, in short, Plutarch is convinced that the euergetic system neither contributes to the well-being of the people nor to that of the politician, but rather that it proves pernicious to both parties at once (821F–822A).

Even so, Plutarch also resembles Dio in avoiding a radical rejection of euergetism. Particularly interesting in this respect is the short chapter 30 of his *Political precepts*, where he both shows *why* the rich politician should participate in the euergetic system and *how* he should do this. First the reason why: a rich politician who refuses to contribute will incur the enmity of his fellow citizens, since “people are more hostile to a rich man who does not give them a share of his private fortune than to a poor man who steals from the public treasury, being convinced that the former despises them, whereas the latter is forced by necessity” (822AB). This argument is of paramount importance for a correct understanding of the rest of the chapter. Plutarch is here concerned with the reputation of the rich politician, which is a mere subservient means to his final political goal. Public donations, then, are regarded in this chapter as a means to secure the politician's good reputation, which will enable him to accomplish his political project.

¹³⁶ On Plutarch's reinterpretation of the politician's φιλοτιμία, see G. Roskam (2004/5), 93–103.

The three pieces of advice that follow should be understood in this light:

- [1] The gifts should be made without expecting anything in return, for in this way they will be most efficient (822B).
- [2] The politician should make use of the *καιρός*, which offers him an elegant and honourable pretext (*πρόφασιν ἀστείαν καὶ καλήν*). He can, for instance, connect his gift with a religious custom so as to contribute to the general piety and should in any case avoid immoral behaviour (822BC).
- [3] The goal of the gift should be either what is honourable (*τὸ καλόν*), what is necessary (*τὸ ἀναγκαῖον*) or even what is pleasant and agreeable without any harm and insolence (*τὸ ἡδὺ καὶ κεραισμένον ἄνευ βλάβης καὶ ὕβρεως προσούσης*) (822C).

This concrete advice illustrates how the rich politician should introduce the euergetic practices into the broader framework of his philosophical-political goal. Again, similarly to Dio, Plutarch underlines that public donations should always be reconciled with moral demands, but more than Dio—and probably influenced by his Platonic views—he realises that such donations can offer interesting opportunities if they are reoriented and used in the service of the politician's own project. In Plutarch's perspective, euergetism remains an interesting political means, but politics itself is ultimately transformed into *Seelenheilung*.

c) One may presume that Diogenes basically agreed with Plutarch's and Dio's criticism of euergetism (albeit partly for different reasons). As has been shown, his gift should in all likelihood not be understood as imitation and emulation of the rich donations of politicians such as Opramoas. And yet, like Plutarch and Dio, Diogenes appears to accept (and even participate in) the euergetic practices of his day. I have already turned to the difficult question of Diogenes' motivation above (cf. *supra*, 4.3.1). Plutarch's observations can now throw a new light on this problem. They may help to reveal that Diogenes' motivations were not so disinterested after all.

For if Diogenes was very rich—which he obviously was—he risked to damage his reputation by refusing to spend part of his wealth for the public interest. He would not have bothered about the political implications of such a bad reputation, to be sure, but he would no doubt have been concerned with his personal security. Epicurus himself made it clear that the sage will take thought for his good reputation

in order not to be despised (Diog. Laert. 10,120 = fr. 573 Us.; cf. *supra*, 2.3.2.2a). In that sense, Diogenes had to face a difficult dilemma. On the one hand, he was forced to enter the euergetic system for reasons of personal security in order to avoid the people's contempt, which could easily lead to βλάβαι ἐξ ἀνθρώπων (Diog. Laert. 10,117 = fr. 536 Us.). In that light, his gift is no less *sua causa* than motivated by unselfish φιλανθρωπία. On the other hand, Epicurus strongly advised to abstain from politics, which in Diogenes' time seemed to imply an avoidance of the current politically oriented euergetic donations. In Diogenes' case, two important aspects of Epicurus' doctrine have apparently come into conflict with one another. His solution is brilliant. By offering his stoa,¹³⁷ he presumably succeeds in meeting the expectations of his fellow citizens; by having it inscribed with the core of Epicurean philosophy and underlining his apolitical attitude, he remains entirely in line with the doctrine of his master. Moreover, he *de facto* follows Plutarch's three part advice, even better than Plutarch's own politician.

That his gift is made without expecting anything in return is more obvious in Diogenes' case than in that of Plutarch's politician, who remains concerned with his own reputation. Diogenes can confidently emphasise that he is not interested at all in political power or fame and that he does not pursue an official decree or honorific inscription. As Smith correctly observes, "his inscription, instead of recording his gifts, is his gift".¹³⁸ As a direct result, his own emphasis on φιλανθρωπία—even if it misrepresents to a certain extent his motivations, since it pushes his concern for personal security to the background—was no doubt generally convincing for Diogenes' ordinary readers.¹³⁹ Few would be inclined to believe indeed that Diogenes' inscription aimed at the political honour of its author.

In Plutarch's view, such a gift is more efficient, as "it amazes and subdues the recipients more completely" (*Praec. ger. reip.* 822B). This raises the question as to what extent Diogenes succeeded in recruiting new followers through his inscription and to what extent he really intended to do so. Here we enter a field of tension that is not uncharacteristic for

¹³⁷ Most scholars agree that Diogenes also offered the stoa upon which the inscription was carved. References can be found in M.F. Smith (2003), 53–54, who himself prefers to suspend judgement on the issue. Arguments against this view are found in A. Casanova (1984), 30.

¹³⁸ (1993a), 53; similarly J. Warren (2000), 145.

¹³⁹ And, it should be added, even for far less ordinary readers such as D. Clay (1989), 320, and J. Warren (2000), 145.

the Epicurean point of view. Diogenes' inscription is to be found in a public place (cf. fr. 3, V, 12 – VI, 2), is addressed to all his fellow citizens (fr. 3, I, 3–4 and 29, III, 7–8; both readings are hypothetical, though) and even to all Greeks and barbarians (fr. 32, II, 11–12). On the other hand, it of course presupposes literacy (which implies quite a serious limitation of the reading public)¹⁴⁰ and among the literate, Diogenes only aims at those who have the correct constitution (εὐσύγκριτοι).¹⁴¹ These should be prepared to read the inscription attentively.¹⁴² Such a cumulative series of limitations creates a bottleneck which guarantees that it is far less crowded, and much more tranquil, at the gates of Diogenes' garden than at the portals of the philosophy Plutarch had in mind (*De prof. in virt.* 81E). The man who prefers festivals or gladiatorial shows should turn to C. Iulius Demosthenes rather than to Diogenes. But everyone who is impressed by the message inscribed upon the Epicurean Stoa and sincerely wishes to be cured by the medicines it proposes, in principle qualifies to become an Epicurean friend. Their number may have been small, but that would hardly have spoiled the pleasures of Diogenes' Epicurean life.

As to Plutarch's second piece of advice, regarding the politician's elegant and honourable pretext, it is clear that Diogenes has no need of it at all. Whereas festivals should be connected with the worship of a god in order to reach a higher moral purpose, Diogenes can directly focus on the moral and intellectual cure of his beneficiaries. He administers his *Seelenheilung* directly rather than indirectly. Moreover, Plutarch's politician needs his pretext because he remains to a certain extent dependent on his people: it is because he wishes to give in to their love of spectacles that he needs a kind of moral embellishment. Diogenes is much more free in this respect, since he is able to choose himself the means that best serves his philosophical project independent from political success or failure.

The τέλος of his donation, finally, is without any doubt what is pleasant and agreeable without any harm or insolence. This goal, which occupies the lowest position on Plutarch's value scale, is the only one that truly matters in Diogenes' Epicurean perspective. His

¹⁴⁰ Cf. P. Scholz (2003).

¹⁴¹ Fr. 2, II, 14; 3, III, 4–5, and perhaps 119, III, 1–2. Another limitation in 30, I, 8–12: μὴ πᾶσι τοῖς ἐνταῦθα δὴ, ἀλλὰ τοῖς τούτων στόμα κοσμίους.

¹⁴² Fr. 30, III, 5–14. According to M.F. Smith (2000), 243, a similar call for attention was perhaps to be read in the introduction to the epitome on physics.

inscription directly contributes to the realisation of the Epicurean ideal of a pleasant life, since it helps to guarantee his personal security and also gives him the pleasure of helping others. One may add that it also intends to enhance the pleasures of other people by doing away with their irrational fears and vain desires. In that sense, Diogenes' donation is an efficient means towards the service of his own philosophical goal and once again provides evidence towards his consistency as an Epicurean thinker.

Similarly to Plutarch, then, Diogenes reorients the euergetic system of his day towards his own philosophical purpose. But whereas Plutarch tried to *transform* politics into *Seelenheilung*, Diogenes simply *replaces* it by *Seelenheilung*. Accordingly, while Plutarch regards euergetism as a political means in the service of a higher, moral ideal, Diogenes completely disconnects his donation from the political sphere. His emphatical claim of οὐ πολειτευόμενος enables him to avoid both the foolish conduct and unlimited desires of men like Opramoas as well as the problematic aspects of other philosophical interpretations such as that of Plutarch. It also fully contributes to his credibility as an author, his personal security as a citizen of Oenoanda, and his pleasure as an Epicurean philosopher. If there ever was one Epicurean who made a virtue of necessity, it must have been Diogenes.

4.3.4. Yet, there remains one important problem. Diogenes explicitly claims that he does not engage in politics (οὐ πολειτευόμενος), but immediately adds that he is speaking as if he were taking action (καθάπερ πράττων) (fr. 3, I, 4–7). Smith most interestingly shows that the verb πράττειν is often used of being active in politics.¹⁴³ This raises the question of why Diogenes adds this phrase. If withdrawing from the political scene proves so advantageous for Diogenes, why does he still feel the need to reintroduce, as it were, his donation into the domain of politics? Why, in short, does he apparently try to get in by the back door what he threw out through the front door?

If this is just one example of his garrulity, it would make Diogenes a very clumsy and inconsiderate thinker, since it is clear that the phrase, while being in this view an unnecessary addition, does not contribute at all to the clarity of Diogenes' position. This is obviously not the best interpretation of Diogenes' words, nor should they be understood as

¹⁴³ (1993a), 438; to the parallels which he mentions may be added Aristotle, *EN* 6, 1141b26–29.

an attempt to emulate indirectly the πράξεις of benefactors such like Opramoas. A more promising solution may perhaps be found in his concern for personal security. By placing his donation back into the framework of current euergetic practices, he subtly makes it clear to his fellow citizens that they owe the same gratitude and benevolence to him as to their other benefactors.

Yet in my view the most satisfactory solution is to be found elsewhere. We should once again turn to Plutarch, this time to his anti-Epicurean polemics. There he often attacks Epicurus' political doctrine on the ground that it leads to ἀπραξία (*Non posse* 1100C; cf. *De tuenda* 135B and *De tranq. an.* 466A). In Plutarch's (biased) view, ἀπραξία δι' ἀγνοίας is even the direct consequence of Epicurus' precept of λάθε βιώσας (*De lat. viv.* 1129D; cf. also 1129A and 1130E). The advice to 'live unnoticed' amounts to a kind of inactivity that hardly differs from death (cf. also Maximus of Tyre, 15,7 and Epictetus, 4,4,2). In that light, Diogenes' juxtaposition of οὐ πολειτευόμενος and καθάπερ πράττων becomes very significant. It may be understood as an answer to philosophical attacks such as those mentioned above. Diogenes' action shows that the Epicurean doctrine does not necessarily lead to inactivity. Even while explicitly underlining his preference for a sequestered life far away from the world of politics, Diogenes can be confident of serving the public interest equally to—or even better than—public-spirited philosophers or politicians. Like the claim of οὐ πολειτευόμενος, the phrase καθάπερ πράττων thus combines a polemical aspect with an aspect of consciously orthodox Epicurean self-presentation.

4.3.5. To conclude, Diogenes' inscription is not at odds with Epicurean political philosophy. His explicit claim of οὐ πολειτευόμενος proves justified and meaningful, underlining as it does Diogenes' orthodox position and criticising both the conduct of contemporary benefactors and the view of other more public-spirited philosophers. Diogenes definitely does not pursue political power or fame (for whatever reason), but only pleasure (both for himself and for others). If each action of the Epicurean philosopher should finally be judged according to the criterion of pleasure (*RS* 25), Diogenes' inscription fully stands up to the test.

Diogenes' decision to offer (the stoa with) the inscription to his hometown can be perfectly reconciled with the ideal of λάθε βιώσας. The goal of the inscription is neither the entering of public life nor showing off, but only pleasure. And behind the brilliant façade of the monumental inscription, Diogenes can continue in all tranquillity to

'live unnoticed' in the company of his friends.¹⁴⁴ One can perfectly imagine that he sometimes, in spite of his old age and poor health, derived pleasure from shuffling towards his inscription and observing foreign passers-by who were reading the message. These foreigners need not know that the sick old man next to them was the very author of the inscription. There need not even have been any exchange of words between them. Yet Diogenes will have returned perfectly satisfied to his little garden. This, if anything, shows perfect mastery of the Epicurean doctrine.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. M.F. Smith (1993a), 123 and J. Warren (2000), 144–145.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

ὕπῃοξέ τε ἐκ τοῦ ἐπὶ πλεῖστον τοῖς
μετέπειτα ἐπικουρείοις μὴδ' αὐτοῖς
εἰπεῖν πῶ ἐναντίον οὔτε ἀλλήλοις οὔτε
Ἐπικούρῳ μὴδὲν εἰς μὴδέν, ὅτου καὶ
μνησθῆναι ἄξιον

(Numenius, ap. Euseb., *PE* 14,5,3)

5.1. Nicomedia, May 1, 305 A.D. Diocletian of his own free will abdicates in the presence of the army, and withdraws as a private citizen to Salona (Lactantius, *mort. pers.* 19). Three years later, Herculus and Galerius try to convince him to reassume the office of emperor. His reaction to the proposal has been preserved in Aurelius Victor: “If only you could see at Salona the vegetables I have cultivated with my own hands, you would undoubtedly never have decided to make this attempt” (*epit.* 39,6), after which, one may presume, he resumed his life as a private citizen in perfect tranquillity.

Whether or not this anecdote has a historical basis, Diocletian’s *dictum* in any case calls to mind a whole cluster of ideas about the pleasures of sequestered *otium*, the simple life in the country, and the unending efforts that a political career inevitably presupposes. All of this, of course, does not make Diocletian’s decision an Epicurean one. Not everyone who prefers the pleasures of country life to the great troubles and dangers of politics is necessarily an Epicurean philosopher. This again raises the questions of what the typical characteristics of the Epicurean point of view are, of how persuasive it really was (from the very beginning up to Diocletian’s day and even later), and of the degree in which it was influenced by contemporary social and political circumstances. These questions will be discussed in the rest of this conclusion.

5.2. Epicurus’ advice to ‘live unnoticed’ has reached us without its direct context. The maxim λάθε βιώσας forms a self-contained unit which directly appeals to the mind of the readers as a well-formulated

advice about the best way of life. Yet this absence of any context can be particularly misleading, in that it may attribute to the Epicurean maxim an absoluteness which it definitely did not have. In order to reach a correct understanding of Epicurus' advice, it has to be interpreted against the background of his philosophy which regards pleasure as the final end. An 'unnoticed life', then, is one of the means that contributes to this end. It implies an avoidance of participation in politics, a career as an orator and more generally of any action that is motivated by ambition and love of honour. As a general rule and for the same reasons such an 'unnoticed life' should come to an end in an 'unnoticed death' (λάθε ἀποβίωσας).

5.2.1. That an 'unnoticed life' indeed yields far more pleasures than a brilliant political or rhetorical career is demonstrated by several arguments repeated time and again throughout the history of the school. First of all, Epicurus and his followers emphasise the importance of personal security, which may best be reached through a sequestered life (ἀσφάλεια ἐξ ἡσυχίας). Withdrawal from public life enables the Epicurean to avoid enmities and passions such as hatred, envy, or contempt, all of which entail βλάβαι ἐξ ἀνθρώπων, and primarily directs his attention to the safer circle of neighbours and friends. In addition to the importance of personal security, there is also the limitation of desires. Ambition and love of honour or power fall under the category of unnatural and unnecessary desires that are hard to satisfy and are a constant source of anxieties and even dangers. That this is true clearly appears from the life of the famous statesmen of the past, who were often unhappy and unable to reach the pleasures of a tranquil life. The Epicurean will remember these lessons from history and cure himself of his vain desires. Finally, a political career considerably harms personal self-sufficiency, since the politician has to take into account the desires of his fellow citizens. The same holds true for the orator, whose persuasiveness and success partly depends on the preferences of his audience.

On the basis of all of these arguments, the Epicureans were convinced of the meaningfulness and usefulness of the maxim λάθε βιώσας. A careful *calculus* of pleasures and pains clearly shows that the choice for an 'unnoticed life' is usually the best alternative. It is important to underline indeed that this ideal of an 'unnoticed life' is not only based on largely negative, elenctic arguments. The Epicureans also advocated in very positive terms their own way of life, of which they were proud. Their lengthy attack on the negative consequences of a public life is

balanced by their great enthusiasm for all of the pleasures which a sequestered life can offer. Their advice to 'live unnoticed', in short, was no less rooted in their concern for the maximisation of pleasures than for the minimisation of pains. Both, in fact, are interchangeable.

5.2.2. The Epicurean ideal of an 'unnoticed life' thus forms part and parcel of a coherent and consistent philosophical perspective, which is characterised by the following typical features.

It is *thoroughly rational*. This is a general characteristic of Epicurean philosophy as a whole. One may recall Lucian's remark that the base deceit of Alexander of Abonoteichus required someone like Epicurus or Metrodorus, with a mind as firm as it was adamant towards such matters (*Alex.* 17) and that the Κύρται δόξαι purify by right reasoning, truth, and frankness (*ibid.* 47). The same sober rationality returns with regards to the domain of politics and rhetoric as well. The Epicurean ponders his decisions by means of a careful *calculus*. If indeed he decides to 'live unnoticed', he does not do so on the basis of his emotions, temperament, or unreflected ideals, but because he has gained the rational insight that such decision greatly contributes to his pleasure.

It is *open-minded*. The Epicurean approaches everyday reality with only few a priors. His attitude towards politics and politicians is far less apodictic and absolute than doxographic and polemical sources often suggest. Particularly interesting in this respect is the view of Philodemus. He takes care to secure as much as possible the autonomy of the political domain against the comprehensive claims of philosophy, which enables him to recognise the positive aspects of politics without feeling the need to participate in it himself. In such a perspective, the Epicurean needs no longer to remain blind to the great merits of some famous statesmen and he can even praise their actions and accomplishments if they are based on a rational *calculus* and serve their personal security and pleasure. A similar attitude is adopted towards history. An open-minded evaluation of historical data enables the Epicurean to use them in a meaningful way as an argument for his own position.

It is *not anarchistic, subversive or solipsistic*. Epicurus' advice to 'live unnoticed' is not intended to hide immoral behaviour or to escape legal punishment. The Epicureans are neither interested in ambitious social reforms nor in abolishing legislation and social establishment. They rather appreciate existing law and order as a source of security and realise very well that virtuous conduct yields more pleasure than

criminal actions. They also attempt to respect social *decorum* and avoid giving offence. In that sense, it also becomes clear that their perspective is far from solipsistic. Even more, the Epicurean takes the decision to 'live unnoticed' *sua causa*, to be sure, but this does not preclude that he enjoys his pleasures in the company of many like-minded friends.

It is characterised by a *qualifying philosophy*. Epicurus does not formulate rigid and fixed rules that condition and regulate the lives of his followers without any room for exceptions, but usually qualifies his view with restrictions and provisos. In line with this general feature of Epicurean philosophy, the maxim *λάτρε βιώσας* also admits of exceptions. The Epicurean can engage in politics or give public lectures before large audiences under particular circumstances when his project will benefit himself or his community. Here, as always, the decisive factor is the criterion of pleasure, measured through a rational *calculus*.

It is characterised by a *down-to-earth approach*. Epicurus has little respect for high, but empty and vague ideals such as *τὸ καλόν*, or for canonised paradigms of political excellence such as Pericles or Themistocles. His followers, too, underline the prosaic aspects of political life and the unhappiness of the politicians, as antidote against the spell of traditional ideals. Furthermore, the Epicureans also pay attention to the more concrete implications of their view. Epicurus does not merely show *that* and *why* one should abandon politics, but also explains to politicians *how* they should do this. Later, Philodemus in his *De oeconomia* examines at length how the Epicureans can support themselves. Here too, fixed rules have to yield to inspiring advice which leaves ample room for personal reflection and initiative.

Finally, it is *practically-oriented*. Epicurus elaborates a philosophical theory that has direct implications for daily life. Accordingly, the soundness of the advice to 'live unnoticed' is not proven by the theoretical truth of its arguments, but by the pleasures it offers. Moreover, the doctrine also requires that one should abandon all empty desires, which often presupposes a whole process of *Seelenheilung*. The true Epicurean, then, is not the one who agrees that one should 'live unnoticed', but the one who does so and—except for special circumstances—continues to do so.

5.3. When one examines the evolution of the doctrine of *λάτρε βιώσας* throughout the history of Epicurus' school, one may be struck by a remarkable unanimity among its members. All of Epicurus' followers that have been discussed in this book are basically orthodox

Epicureans. They all repeat fundamentally the same arguments and share the same general perspective. Occasionally they provide their own accents, to be sure, and on several points, they are more apodictic and less nuanced than their distinguished master. But such differences in tone can nearly always be explained by the particular character of their work or by the specific context in which they are writing. They hardly deviate from the letter of Epicurus' doctrines and never from the spirit.

It is clear that this conclusion corroborates (and is corroborated by) Numenius' famous statement about the internal harmony among the Epicureans. In his view, the Epicureans resemble the Pythagoreans in never opposing the views of their master. The Epicurean school is presented as a true state, completely free from faction, with one shared mind and one opinion, and always the same in the past, the present, and the future (Eusebius, *PE* 14,5,3 = fr. 24 des Places). Yet, Numenius' view should be adjusted on two points. First, it is true that all Epicureans underline their loyalty to their master, but such an attitude is less exceptional than Numenius claims it to be. In spite of the picture which he draws, later Platonists all agree about the unsurpassed genius of the 'divine' Plato and all Stoics in unison sing the praise of the founders of their school. Second, Numenius is no doubt correct in pointing to the mutual disagreements between Stoics (14,5,4), Socratics (14,5,5–6), and Platonists (14,5,1–2), but his suggestion that the Epicureans were better fails to convince us. The many traces of heated discussions in Philodemus' works make it clear that Epicureanism was not the uncritical, fossilised philosophical tradition that is depicted by Numenius. In the end, all philosophical schools showed the same loyalty to their own founding fathers, and had to face analogous problems concerning the interpretation of the orthodox doctrine. The real problem, in short, was not whether or not to be loyal, but how to be loyal.

Numenius' evaluation of Epicureanism, then, should be understood against the background of his own philosophy. On the one hand, his positive presentation is probably the direct consequence of the fact that he was far less familiar with the internal discussions of the Epicurean school than with those of his own. On the other hand, it is equally probable that he did not feel the need to deny or nuance the harmony among the Epicureans, since he could use it as an argument for his own polemical-irenical goal. The Epicurean unanimity can function as a kind of mirror in which the dissenting Platonists are confronted with the ideal of philosophical consensus. The conduct of the Epicureans

shows that this ideal can indeed be reached, and adds to the protreptic power of Numenius' appeal (if the Epicureans are able to do so *a fortiori* can we, being Platonists!).

It is clear, then, that Numenius' presentation of the great harmony among later Epicurean philosophers is at least partly conditioned by his own philosophical goals. This observation makes it dangerous to isolate his statement from its surrounding context and use it as further evidence in order to corroborate the conclusion that the later Epicureans all remained basically orthodox in their acceptance of the doctrine of λάτρε βιώσας. In fact, such conclusion does not need the corroboration of Numenius, since it is more than sufficiently confirmed by the extant texts of the later Epicureans themselves.

5.4. Taken from the perspective of the school, the basic doctrinal harmony between the different generations of Epicureans is hardly surprising. The attitude of suspicion regarding participation in public life is one of the fundamental insights that unite the members of the Epicurean community. Yet, there is something paradoxical about exactly this doctrinal harmony. For even while it is true that Epicurus' political philosophy is based on sober and rational reflection, it is certainly not detached from its time. Epicurus neither wishes to escape into the dream world of bucolic Arcadia nor into a lonely hole such as Lebedus. His careful *calculus* of pleasure and pain fully takes into account the political situation of his day. Epicurus never philosophises *in vacuo*. Concrete contemporary circumstances, then, are part and parcel of the soil in which his political philosophy is rooted.

Nonetheless, the diagnosis which he offers, even if connected with his own contemporary situation, also easily transcends this situation. For centuries, his philosophy attracts new adepts, who continue to put forward fundamentally the same arguments and defend the same outlook on life. Neither the diagnosis nor the therapy undergo substantial changes. The same irrational fears and vain desires always require the same healing method. As such, the Epicurean point of view remains as relevant for the Athens of the third century B.C. as for the Late Republic of Lucretius and Philodemus. It still appeals to Horace during the Early Principate, and is much later presented by Diogenes of Oenoanda as the only way to reach happiness. It is successful in great centres such as Athens and Rome, but also in far less important places such as Lampsacus, Herculaneum, or even a provincial town such as Oenoanda.

The easiest explanation of this somewhat surprising continuity lies in the hypothesis that the attention of the different generations of Epicureans remained for the greatest part confined to their own Garden. Living unnoticed, they did not feel the need to care for the external world. The truth of their own tried and tested tradition was sufficient for them to enjoy the pleasures of their Epicurean way of life. This hypothesis, attractive though it might seem, is certainly wrong. Again and again, later Epicureans followed in the footsteps of their master by interacting in a meaningful way with the social reality of their own time. Metrodorus already temporarily engaged in politics in order to help Mithres. Lucretius, whose position was thoroughly orthodox and who often did not even seem to take into account later developments, still alluded more than once unambiguously to the contemporary political situation of his own day. He even used the current circumstances—which strongly differed from those in Epicurus' days—as an argument in favour of his Epicurean view. Similarly, Philodemus' attention was primarily focused on his own school, but this does not imply that he remained unacquainted with what happened outside the walls of his villa. Being in touch with Piso, he could observe the political events from a privileged position. Again, Diogenes of Oenoanda presented himself as a perfectly orthodox Epicurean, but he made brilliant use of the euergetic practices of his own day. This is definitely not a fossilised philosophy which only parrots age-old truths, but a living tradition that is able to take up the challenges of its own time. Each Epicurean in his own way rediscovered how Epicurus' general insights could be applied to his own situation. Even if they all belonged to the same Epicurean family, each one of them was also a child of his time.

5.5. The observation that Epicurus' philosophy remained attractive in the most diverse environments and periods entails another question. How convincing was Epicurus' message? What was the success of his advice to 'live unnoticed'? It is safe to say that Epicureanism has never been a mass movement. For members of different philosophical schools, Epicurus' doctrines were as unconvincing as their own tenets were for Epicurus, and the great multitude of ordinary people no doubt remained indifferent to the view of all philosophical schools alike. The Epicureans did not even wish to convert the multitude, but preferred to look down from their safe and lofty *templa serena* on the disordered and irrational conduct of most people. Here we encounter yet another paradox. The same ordinary citizen that was despised by the Epicure-

ans *was* living unnoticed, far away from the troubles of politics. He remained prey, however, to irrational fears and empty desires and was the slave of the *πόννοι* of daily life. No doubt, his—unattainable—ideal remained Pericles or Alexander rather than Epicurus. Whereas the Epicurean wished to ‘live unnoticed’, even if he did not have to do so, the ordinary citizens had to do so even if they did not wish to do so.

In that sense, Epicurus’ advice to ‘live unnoticed’ had only a limited success. One may well wonder whether he really wished it to be more successful. He probably addressed everyone who qualified for becoming a member of his community (οἱ εὐσύγκριτοι, in the terms of Diogenes of Oenoanda), but he never wished to convert the multitude. If that is true, there has never been a conflict between the maxim *λάθε βιώσας* and Epicurus’ proselytism. This supposed inconsistency has been invented by polemical opponents, but has never been a problem for Epicurus himself.

5.6. In spite of its rather limited success, the motif of the ‘unnoticed life’ gradually becomes part of the intellectual tradition. At that moment, however, it also loses its typically Epicurean flavour. It is connected with other traditional motifs (such as the *loci communes* of the consolation literature regarding exile in Ovid) or has to yield to the praise of country life (e.g. in Virgil). The latter motif has several elements in common with Epicurean philosophy, to be sure, but still belongs to a different world (cf. *infra*, appendix). This is equally true for Tibullus 1,1 and Juvenal 10 as it is for the anecdote on Diocletian mentioned at the beginning of this conclusion.

This evolution even makes it possible that the ideal of an ‘unnoticed life’ in the end becomes common property that can also be used in other philosophical traditions. Philostratus tells us that the phrase *λάθε βιώσας, εἰ δὲ μὴ δύναιο, λάθε ἀποβιώσας* was used as a kind of motto by Apollonius of Tyana (*VA* 8,28). It is clear of course that we are far away from the spirit of true Epicureanism. This is merely showing off. Apollonius never lived unnoticed and his disappearance shortly before his death is conspicuous in itself. His quotation of traditional wisdom—which is no longer attributed to Epicurus—primarily serves his own self-display.

In later Neo-Platonism, too, the maxim is occasionally mentioned without reference to Epicurus. In Marinus’ view, the advice of *λάθε βιώσας*, which was consistently followed by Proclus, belonged to the Pythagorean tradition (*Procl.* 15.29–32), whereas Damascius attributes it

to a gnomic tradition (*Suda* III, 228.4–7 and IV, 324.3–6 Adler).¹ There, Epicurus has entirely disappeared from sight. What rests is an apt *dictum* without any context, which can easily be appropriated and introduced into the perspective of Neo-Platonism, where it can receive its own well-defined place and function.

What has happened in the meantime with the Epicureans themselves? During the first part of the second century A.D. Epicureanism was no doubt still a living philosophy. Diogenes of Oenoanda provides us with some interesting information about the importance of Epicureanism in one local provincial town and also alludes to his contacts with other communities. Plutarch is another interesting source. His many references to his Epicurean friends² make it clear that Epicureanism was far from dead in his day. Afterwards, and certainly from the third century on, it gradually fell into decline. Here and there, local communities presumably continued to exist for some time, as did the Garden in Athens. According to Diogenes Laertius (10,9), the succession of Epicurean scholarchs remained uninterrupted and the school continued forever (ἐς αἰὶ διαμένουσα). But hardly anything is known about its history in this period, probably because there was hardly anything worth mentioning. The Epicureans simply continued to quietly enjoy the pleasures of their ‘unnoticed life’ and were not interested at all in performing great accomplishments which might attract the attention of doxographers or historians.³ As a result, whereas the first links of the chain are relatively well known, its end is lost in the murky mists of history.

Gradually, it became silent in the different Epicurean communities. One by one, the gates of their gardens were closed forever. Then, we finally encounter the last paradox: in spite of the many attacks from all quarters and the deafening noise of the many opponents, Epicurean philosophy on the battlefield of polemics died an unnoticed death.

¹ Cf. also Macarius 5,47 (*CPG* II,183), where the maxim is treated as a proverb and attributed to Democritus.

² See J.P. Hershbelt (1992), 3355–3356; cf. also J. Boulogne (2003), 18.

³ Cf. J. Glucker (1978), 370–371.

CHAPTER SIX

APPENDIX: AUGUSTAN POETRY

si liceat, nulli cognitus esse velim

(Ovid, *Trist.* 5,12,42)

6.1. *Virgil*

6.1.1. All authors discussed so far were confirmed Epicureans in that they fully subscribed to the doctrines of Epicurus.¹ Later followers such as Lucretius and Philodemus wrote in a different context, to be sure, and sometimes added their own accents, but they all shared basically the same loyalty towards their distinguished master. This undeniable loyalty towards Epicurus is far less clear in poets such as Virgil, Horace, or Ovid. Their poems are not the most evident place to look for references to the maxim *λάθε βιώσας*. And yet, their sometimes close connection with Epicurean philosophy has intensively been studied,² and different passages from their poems have been related to the Epicurean ideal of an ‘unnoticed life’ and have even found their way into Usener’s collection of fragments. This is a more than sufficient reason to enter, albeit with a certain diffidence, the rich world of these great masters of Latin poetry.

A preliminary methodological remark is well in place here. In itself, the motif of an ‘unnoticed life’ is fairly general. It can occur in different contexts and can be connected with diverse themes. In poetry, several typical themes come fairly close to the ideal of an ‘unnoticed life’: the humble and frugal life of ordinary people (such as Philemon and Baucis for instance), the uncomplicated life in the primitive ages or in an *aurea aetas*, the bucolic way of life of simple-hearted shepherds and the simple existence of the modest farmer. It is clear that all of these themes can be connected to the motif of the ‘unnoticed life’. Often, such a connection is not directly made explicit, although sometimes it is.

¹ On the two possible meanings of the term ‘Epicurean’, see D.J. Furley (1978), 1.

² Bibliography in J. Ferguson (1990), 2267, and M. Erler (1994a), 377–378.

In my view, all of these motifs are primarily rooted in an agelong poetical tradition rather than in an Epicurean one. Yet, as has been said above, many of these motifs have also been connected with Epicurean philosophy. Moreover, one should note that the thesis of an Epicurean influence on the Augustan poets has been defended by specialists of poetry and specialists of Epicureanism alike and should thus be taken seriously as a hypothesis by both groups alike. This observation leads to the basic question to be discussed in this appendix: to what extent can we find traces of the specific Epicurean ideal of *λάθῃ βιώσας* in poets such as Virgil, Horace, and Ovid?

This question is deliberately raised in a fairly restrictive (philosophical-technical) way. I do not look for general 'philosophical' doctrines that can as easily be associated with a kind of vulgarised Epicureanism (whatever that may be) as with a kind of simplified Stoicism or popularised Platonism (e.g. the praise of virtue, *aurea mediocritas*, etc.). Echoes of such doctrines can be found in abundance, but in my view, they have little, if any, cogency. I think it is only meaningful to speak about Epicurean influence on the poets on the basis of particular references which are specific enough to be recognised as typically Epicurean. In this respect, the ideal of *λάθῃ βιώσας* can provide an interesting test-case. The following analysis, which carefully takes into account a more strictly philosophical point of view, will show that there are only a few passages that can be regarded as evidence of Epicurean influence. Yet the conclusion of this appendix will not be entirely negative. In Horace, notably, will be found some passages which indeed show an unmistakably Epicurean influence.

6.1.2. Of the three poets mentioned above, Virgil undoubtedly has the closest relations to Epicureanism. His familiarity with Epicurean philosophy rests on a double foundation. First of all, it is beyond dispute that he was thoroughly familiar with Lucretius' *De rerum natura*. This influence can indeed be found in many passages of his works,³ although it is fair to say that direct parallels between Virgil and Lucretius need not always imply that both authors also share the same philosophical view. Many borrowings are merely formal, and some can be understood as

³ Already noted by Aulus Gellius, 1,21,7. An extensive list of parallels can be found in W.A. Merrill (1918); cf. also A.K. Michels (1944a) and G. Castelli (1966), (1967) and (1969).

‘polemical allusions’.⁴ In recent scholarship, Lucretius’ position is more than once, and with good reasons, regarded as Virgil’s point of departure, which is then modified or replaced by another perspective.⁵

There remains, however, the second element. In spite of such implicit criticism of Lucretius, we know that Virgil—at least for some time—kept in close touch with the circle of Philodemus. The presence of his name in several fragmentary texts of Philodemus⁶ enhances the credibility of other sources, which introduce Virgil as a pupil of the Epicurean Siro at Naples.⁷ This leads to the important conclusion that Virgil was not merely acquainted with the theoretical aspects of Epicurean philosophy, but also with the practice of a sequestered life among friends.⁸ Tacitus’ reference (*dial.* 13,1) to Virgil’s *felix contubernium* and to his safe and tranquil withdrawal (*securum et quietum ... secessum*) may well allude to the poet’s Epicurean way of life. The term *securum* recalls the Epicurean doctrine of ἀσφάλεια,⁹ whereas *quietum secessum* makes clear that this ἀσφάλεια rests on the ἡσυχία of a sequestered life. The phrase *felix contubernium*, finally, points to the company of friends, which is so essential for happiness in the Epicurean point of view.¹⁰ In that sense, this passage from Tacitus may well suggest an intimate familiarity with the concrete practice of the Epicurean life. Virgil may have known doxographic sources of Epicureanism, to be sure,¹¹ but he certainly did not need them to become introduced to Epicurus’ philosophy. The same Tacitean passage, however, also leads to an important *caveat*. It recalls that Virgil’s *secessum* neither excluded the favour of Augustus nor fame among his people (*neque apud divum Augustum gratia caruit neque apud populum Romanum notitia*). This observation has its own function in Maternus’ argument, to be sure, but it also points to aspects of Virgil’s career that are perhaps less evident in—even though not necessarily incompatible with—the Epicurean point of view. The phrase *apud populum Romanum notitia* in any case seems

⁴ Thus B. Farrington (1963); cf. also N.W. DeWitt (1932), 91.

⁵ See, e.g., S. Schäfer (1996) and M.R. Gale (2000).

⁶ The first to read the name Οὐ[εργί]λ[ε] in *PHerc.* 1082 was A. Körte (1890), 177, but his conjecture long remained controversial. It was finally corroborated by the reading Οὐεργ[ί]λ[ε] in *PHerc. Paris.* 2; see M. Gigante – M. Capasso (1989).

⁷ Servius, *ecl.* 6,13 and *Aen.* 6,264; *Vita Verg.* l. 6 Hard.; *Vita Focae* 63–64; *Vita Probiana* l. 10–12 Hard., cf. also *catal.* 5 and 8.

⁸ Pace H. Naumann (1978).

⁹ Rather than ἀταραξία (maintained by J. Ferguson (1988), 23).

¹⁰ For Virgil’s practice of friendship, see G. Castelli (1966), 317–324.

¹¹ Cf. A. Michel (1970).

at odds with Epicurus' advice of *λάθε βιώσας*. If Virgil indeed adopted an Epicurean way of life, he may still have added foreign elements to it.

Both elements thus prove to be rather uncertain, even though they may for the time being suffice to support at least the façade of Virgil's Epicureanism. If one wishes to look behind this façade, however, in order to try to find references to, or echoes of, the Epicurean ideal of an 'unnoticed life', diffidence immediately returns. For it is extremely difficult to do justice to all aspects of Virgil's works, and moreover, it is often far from clear which view Virgil precisely defends, even whether he defends any definite view at all. Recent research on the *Georgics*, for instance, has shown that Virgil there juxtaposes different points of view without dissolving the tension.¹² In any case, the meaning of Virgil's poems is to an important extent generated by the reader himself. Some readers will focus attention on the way Virgil emulates his Greek models (Theocritus for the *Eclogues*, Hesiod and Aratus for the *Georgics*, Homer for the *Aeneid*, to name only the most important ones), others on his attitude towards the contemporary political context (Octavian), still others on his poetical ideals. All of these readers will throw light on important aspects of the poet's work, but none will claim to offer an exhaustive treatment of it.

In the context of this study, my attention is fixed on a minor aspect of Virgil's work. Does it contain references to the Epicurean maxim *λάθε βιώσας*? Will an Epicurean reader be able to recognise his own ideals, especially that of 'living unnoticed', in Virgil's poems? Let us put this question to such a reader, Virgil's teacher, Siro. Let us mentally go back to his school and trouble him during his *otium* with our question. We do not ask him to do justice to all aspects of Virgil's work, as this is not within his competence, nor within ours. We merely ask him to read Virgil's poems from his own Epicurean point of view.¹³ On that point, the above mentioned diffidence can in Siro's case make place for a certain confidence, for as far as Epicurean philosophy is concerned, he, rather than Virgil, is the authority (Cicero, *fin.* 2,119; cf. also *ac.* 2,106).

¹² G.B. Miles (1980); M.R. Gale (2000); cf. also L.J. Kronenberg (2000).

¹³ Of course, I realise that there is a theoretical problem here: if the meaning of Virgil's poems is generated by the individual reader, various Epicurean readers will obtain different results. Philodemus would perhaps give a somewhat different interpretation than Lucretius or Epicurus himself. A partial solution is to ask Siro to read Virgil as an orthodox Epicurean would have done (but opinions can greatly differ on what should be understood by 'orthodox Epicureanism', even within the

6.1.3. When we begin by putting the *Eclogues* in Siro's hands, we would do well by warning him in advance that Virgil nowhere explicitly refers to Epicurean doctrine. He neither mentions Epicurus' name, nor that of one of his famous followers. If there can be found echoes of the Epicurean ideal of *λάθῃ βιώσας* after all, Siro will in any case have to look attentively for them.

This warning, significant in itself, will immediately yield fruit when dealing with the first *Eclogue*. Even the first verses, which introduce Tityrus reclining at ease under a spreading beech (*ecl.* 1,1–5), should immediately attract Siro's attention. In the modern literature on Virgil, Tityrus is very often regarded as the prototype of the Epicurean sage.¹⁴ Indeed, there are some elements which might support such a conclusion. Tityrus gives evidence of frugality (1,80–81), in line with his natural and necessary desires, and even appears to enjoy a certain self-sufficiency (1,47: *tibi magna satis*). At the same time, he completely abstains from unnatural and unlimited desires, and remains unaffected by love of wealth or political ambition. Instead, he enjoys the pleasures of his *otia* (1,6), living a quiet life, far away from the troubles of the civil war (1,11–12 and 71–72). Siro would no doubt recognise that these aspects of Tityrus' life bear a close likeness to the Epicurean way of life. Nevertheless, I strongly doubt that he would also recognise himself in the figure of Tityrus.

For first of all, Tityrus' love for Amaryllis shows that he does not confine himself to merely natural and necessary desires (1,5, 30, and 36–38). Secondly, the link between the *otium* of Virgil's shepherds and Epicurus' *λάθῃ βιώσας* usually presupposes a problematic interpretation of the latter. One indeed claims to find in both Virgil and Epicurus the same attempt to “evadere dalla realtà”, to escape in a “mondo di sogno”,¹⁵ but Epicurus did not wish to run away from reality.¹⁶ He rather offered a sober and rational analysis of it. The gates of his Garden provided no entrance to a dream world, but to a world in which real life could be lived and enjoyed. Thirdly, the fact that Tityrus

Epicurean school). A better solution is that, in spite of his name, Siro here functions as an abstraction of the Epicurean philosopher.

¹⁴ See, e.g., A. Traina (1965), 77; P.L. Smith (1965), 301; C. Castelli (1966), 331; Id. (1967), 19 and 35; J.-P. Brisson (1966), 101; cf. also J. Oroz-Reta (1969), 444; P. Grimal (1982), 6; G. Davis (2004).

¹⁵ G. Castelli (1969), 20.

¹⁶ And one may add that even the world of Tityrus is not free from hard work; cf. R. Jenkyns (1998), 188.

does not participate in political life is hardly relevant, since politics is not shepherds' business anyhow (cf. *eccl.* 6,3–5). The complex games of political life with its ambitions belong to a world which is far beyond ordinary people like Tityrus and Meliboeus. Their simple way of life, far away from politics, proves to be their only alternative.

This leads to the final, and probably most important, observation: Tityrus' way of life is not based on a rational foundation. Nowhere can be found a reference to a conscious hedonistic *calculus*, to an insight regarding the disadvantages that a political career entails. In fact, just the opposite appears to be true. To the limited extent that he comes into contact with politicians, he turns out to admire them excessively. The *iuvēnis*—traditionally identified with Octavian¹⁷—is a god to him (*eccl.* 1,6–8 and 42–43). It is sometimes argued that such divinisation can be reconciled with Epicurus' philosophy.¹⁸ Others underline that the allusion to Lucretius in this passage is clearly polemical, since it is not Epicurus, but Octavian who is called divine.¹⁹ In the words of J. Ferguson: "Octavian has for Virgil taken Epicurus's place. The *pax Augusta* has made irrelevant Epicurean quietistic philosophy. Political and public action has done the philosopher's work for him".²⁰ Now whereas the former interpretation remains rather artificial, the latter likewise fails to convince us. For even under the political circumstances of Octavian's day, Epicurus' quietistic philosophy still remains highly relevant. Octavian can offer a necessary condition for security, to be sure, and in that way contribute much to Epicurean tranquillity, but he is unable to do away with all unlimited desires (and irrational fears). It is much more likely, then, that Tityrus' words primarily illustrate his great naïveté. He is full of admiration for what that *iuvēnis* in the brilliant city of Rome can do for him. One simple sentence (1,45) determines his whole further life. This also shows that the absence of a rational perspective in Tityrus directly implies a great degree of dependence. If Tityrus finally succeeds in reaching security, this ἀσφάλεια is not obtained ἐξ ἡσυχίας but ἐξ ἀνθρώπων. He owes his security and happiness to someone else.

¹⁷ *Contra*, however, C.G. Hardie (1975) and R.P.H. Green (1996); cf. also R. Mayer (1983).

¹⁸ See G. Castelli (1967), 38, and G. Davis (2004), 71–72.

¹⁹ B. Farrington (1963), 90; H. Naumann (1975), 249.

²⁰ (1990), 2265; cf. H. Jones (1989), 84.

Siro will not pause for long after his reading of the first *Eclogue*, nor will he identify himself with a rustic such as Tityrus, but rather despise him. The world of rational Epicurean philosophy has nothing to do with that of uncultured shepherds.

6.1.4. This conclusion holds for the other *Eclogues* too. When Siro arrives at the end of the scroll, he has not yet met the Epicurean ideal of an ‘unnoticed life’. Even though this may make him suspicious about the other works he still has to read, he will at least be prepared to have a second try. And thus, he willingly receives a copy of the *Georgics*.

a) The first book hardly contains material that can be connected with Epicurean philosophy.²¹ Siro has to wait until the end of book 2 where he can read the so-called ‘praise of country life’ (2,458–540). This passage has often been regarded as a poetic picture of the Epicurean way of life. First of all, it is often argued—correctly—that the love for nature and the country can perfectly be reconciled with the Epicurean point of view. Epicurus himself agreed that the sage will love the country (φιλαγορήσειν; Diog. Laert. 10,120 = fr. 570 Us.) and two parallels in Lucretius (2,29–33 and 5,1392–1396) illustrate the same idea.²² Secondly, the farmer, just like the shepherds of the *Eclogues*, gives evidence of frugality, being averse to the great luxury of the city (2,461–466; 499; 505–507), and confining himself to natural and necessary desires (cf. 516–522). He enjoys the pleasant company of friends (528) and a happy marriage (523–524).²³ He is free from the troubles of war (459 and 496–498), and, which is especially important in the context of this study, he does not enter politics (501–502) and does not pursue honour (495; cf. 508–510).²⁴ Instead, he enjoys his *otia* (468–471) and *secura quies* (467),

²¹ G.B. Miles (1980), 93–98 even interprets it from a Stoic perspective.

²² Cf. also the parallel passage in *Culex* 58–97, which is connected with Epicureanism by R. Chambert (2004) and earlier by T. Frank (1920); *contra*, however, A.A. Barrett (1970), 326.

²³ The latter, however, cannot be regarded as evidence of an Epicurean way of life. Even if Epicurus, as usual, agreed that there could be exceptions to the rule, he generally dissuaded his followers from marrying; see fr. 19 and 525 Us.; C.W. Chilton (1960), 71–73 and T. Brennan (1996), 348–352.

²⁴ According to H. Naumann (1978), 89, the verses 508–510 present a positive picture of the famous and ambitious orators: “In der vernichtenden Abrechnung mit den Verkehrtheiten der Gegenwart (Geo II 495–512), die überall nur Verbrechen oder bösertige Torheit sieht, wird allein der Redner mit Achtung und Sachlichkeit

a security which, contrary to that of Tityrus, does not come ἐξ ἀνθρώπων²⁵ but ἐξ ἡσυχίας.

Again, Siro would no doubt recognise that important aspects of the farmer's life resemble the Epicurean ideal, but again, I suspect, he would not recognise himself in the farmer, for several reasons. First, the farmer has to work very hard. Only holidays (527) offer a short interruption of his hard labour (472; 513–514; 516: *nec requies*). It is true that the tone here differs from that of book 1, where *labor improbus* occupied a central position, and that much more attention is given to spontaneous growth and natural fertility, but hard work nonetheless remains a dire necessity. These daily efforts, however, will considerably hinder the true pleasures of the Epicurean life. One should merely recall Philodemus' rejection of farming with one's own hands and his advice to have the work done by others (*De oecon.*, col. xxiii, 7–18; cf. *supra*, 4.2.3.2).

Secondly, the ideal of the farmer as presented near the end of book 2 on closer inspection turns out to be no longer attainable, and is projected back into a distant past.²⁶ As such, it is diametrically opposed to the feasibility of the Epicurean ideal.

Finally, all references to a rational basis of the farmer's life are once again absent. In that respect, the farmer of the passage closely resembles the shepherds of the *Eclogues*. His life does not rest on a well-considered choice, based on a hedonistic *calculus*, but should rather be understood as an *alternative* to that of the Epicurean philosopher.²⁷ This also appears from the famous opposition between the blessed philosopher, who has gained insight into the causes of things (490: *felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas*) and thus succeeds in doing away with all fear (491–492; the allusion, of course, is to Lucretius) and the man who knows the rural gods (493–494; Virgil himself; cf. also 475–489).

The conclusion, then, can only be that Siro will identify himself not more with the farmer than with Tityrus the shepherd. He despises the latter, and considers himself fortunate not to be like the former. Once again, he will not pause for a long time, but quickly resumes his reading.

behandelt'. This interpretation, however, is unconvincing, since it is completely at odds with the general tenor of the surrounding context.

²⁵ Pace S. Schäfer (1996), 78.

²⁶ Cf. G.B. Miles (1980), 160–165.

²⁷ Cf. G.B. Miles (1980), 160, and S. Schäfer (1996), 84–94.

b) The third book contains nothing that will attract his special attention. In book 4, however, he finally comes upon the famous and beautiful passage about the Corycian old man (4,116–148). If there is one figure in Virgil's works who qualifies for the title of Epicurean sage, it is he.²⁸ Just like Tityrus and the farmer, he gives evidence of austerity and by limiting himself to his natural and necessary desires, he succeeds in gaining a nearly perfect *αὐτάρκεια* (4,132–133). He also resembles them by completely abstaining from politics, since he lives outside the city, in a remote corner, on a deserted piece of land (125–127). Perhaps it is worthwhile to interrupt Siro at this point in order to reveal the identity of the old man to him. According to Servius (*georg.* 4,127), the Corycian *senex* was an ex-pirate,²⁹ thus being a telling example of a man who left behind a life full of troubles in order to find the rest of a sequestered life.³⁰ But was he also an Epicurean? Siro will probably fail to notice that the whole section strongly resembles a passage in Longus (2,3) and may well be influenced by Philitas,³¹ nor will he be inclined to recognise in the *senex* the prototype of the poet,³² but will he identify him as an Epicurean sage?

First of all, it is clear that the old man, just like the farmer, is working very hard (cf. 4,118 and 133), which may prevent him from enjoying the pleasures of the Epicurean life. It is true, however, that the theme of labour is hardly made explicit and one might argue moreover that the efforts which the cultivation of his garden requires cause far less trouble than those required by politics and public life. The old man's way of life may well be based on a conscious choice.³³ Even if that is true, however, Virgil never suggests that his choice rests on a rational evaluation of different alternatives, on the basis of a hedonistic *calculus*. The Corycian *senex* can be *fortunatus* (provided he knows the rural gods), to be sure, but he does not appear to be *felix* by his insight into the causes of things.

²⁸ See, e.g., J.-P. Brisson (1966), 212–213; J.S. Clay (1981); W.R. Johnson (2004). Even M.R. Gale (2000), 181–182 points to many significant parallels, although she finally prefers to leave the question open.

²⁹ Servius' identification is usually questioned, but has recently been defended by G. Marasco (1990); cf. also M. Leigh (1994).

³⁰ Cf. M.R. Gale (2000), 182: "If Servius is right to claim that the old man should be identified as an ex-pirate, his change of state might be seen as a powerful symbol of the process the Epicureans called *galenismos*."

³¹ See R.F. Thomas (1992).

³² C.G. Perkell (1981); cf. also W.R. Johnson (2004), 79.

³³ Thus C.G. Perkell (1981), 174.

Secondly, he seems to live quite isolated. If he indeed ‘lives unnoticed’, he is doing so with a radicalness that is alien to Epicurus. For indeed, what is remarkable is the absence of friendship in the old man’s garden.³⁴ M.R. Gale may be right to find an allusion to friends in *potantibus* (4.146),³⁵ to be sure, but that does not alter the fact that the theme of friendship largely fades into the background.

Thirdly, in an interesting contribution, Ph. Thibodeau has pointed to the impatience of the old man, which he further connects to the gardener’s old age.³⁶ Apparently, the *senex* is worried over how long he will still be able to enjoy his garden. It is clear of course that such dependence on the future betrays a particularly un-Epicurean point of view. If the impatience of the old man indeed roots in such feelings, his general conduct is obviously not motivated by Epicurean rational arguments.

Finally, the ideal of the old man is once again projected back into a distant past.³⁷ The subjunctive *canerem* (4.119) even presents the whole section about the *senex* as a *praeteritio* that has to always remain unexpressed. As a direct result, the old man’s life risks to become an unattainable ideal, a dream, as it were, which is nostalgically cherished, but has to be abandoned for the sake of the public interest.³⁸ Again, it thus turns out to be opposed to the Epicurean ideal, which is practised by Siro himself. Maybe Siro would pause somewhat longer at the end of this passage, but he will in the end continue his reading. The garden of the Corycian *senex* is not that of Epicurus.

c) Thus, he finally arrives at the end of the *Georgics*. When he already gets ready to give back the scroll and to express for the second time his negative conclusion, his eyes fall on the concluding verses, where Virgil himself is opposed to Octavian. While the latter is busy with war and legislation, the former quietly enjoys in Naples an *ignobile otium* (4.559–566). The opposition is just there without further explanation. It has been interpreted as a direct preparation for the *Aeneid* and as evidence of a certain evolution in Virgil’s thinking.³⁹ Others point to a causal

³⁴ R. Cristofoli (1998), 827; W.R. Johnson (2004), 81–82.

³⁵ (2000), 181.

³⁶ (2001), 176–179.

³⁷ G.B. Miles (1980), 239–240 and 252; M.R. Gale (2000), 182.

³⁸ R. Cristofoli (1998), 827; W.R. Johnson (2004), 81–82.

³⁹ J.-M. André (1966), 505; J. Ferguson (1990), 2266; R. Jenkyns (1998), 634–635; cf.

connection between the two poles, arguing that Virgil's *otium* is made possible by Octavian's great achievements.⁴⁰ Some even argue that it is Virgil, rather than Octavian, who has chosen the best alternative.⁴¹ I would be inclined to agree with M.R. Gale⁴² that this is a striking example of the many unresolved tensions in Virgil's *Georgics*. What, however, will be the position of Siro?

His first reflex would perhaps be to prefer, with much sympathy, Virgil's *ignobile otium*. But then, second thoughts may occur to him. The very *otium* which Virgil claims is directly associated with the world of Tityrus. Again, it may well be the *otium* of the shepherds of the *Eclogues* or the farmer of the second book of the *Georgics*. And yet, Virgil seems to allude to his own Epicurean life in Naples. This may at least for a moment trouble Siro's tranquillity of mind. If he indeed has to take Virgil's words seriously, he cannot but conclude that Virgil did not fully understand his philosophical lessons. I suggest that Siro would in the end shrink from such a conclusion and prefer to leave the question open, but that he would give back the scroll with a deep sigh.

6.1.5. That may well be the signal to conclude. As Siro's reading of the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics* has hardly yielded any positive result, I think it is better to spare him a reading of the *Aeneid*. This is not to say that he would undoubtedly despise the great hero and his accomplishments—he could regard him as a telling example of a great statesman whose virtues greatly benefit his city without, however, always contributing to his own happiness (cf. Philodemus, *Rhet. III*, col. xiv^a, 30 – col. xv^a, 8 Ham.)—but he would certainly not regard the founder of a city, who was driven by a divine mission but who had no friends,⁴³ as a good Epicurean. Furthermore, one should note that the term *otium* occurs only twice in the *Aeneid* (4,271 and 6,813), and in both cases, it appears to have rather negative connotations.⁴⁴ In the world of the *Aeneid*, a passionate plea for an 'unnoticed life' is not to be expected.

more in general J.-P. Brisson (1966), 219, and J. Oroz-Reta (1969), 445. The reference to the *ignobile otium* has been understood as an allusion to the Epicurean maxim of *λάτῃ βίωσας*; see G. Castelli (1966), 327.

⁴⁰ G.B. Miles (1980), 290; M.R. Gale (2000), 244.

⁴¹ R. Jenkyns (1998), 318 and 357; cf. also G.B. Miles (1980), 291–294.

⁴² (2000), 182.

⁴³ D. Armstrong (2004), 19–20.

⁴⁴ See R. Jenkyns (1998), 635–637.

Thus we better allow Siro to resume his own *otium*, though not without first warmly thanking him. For indeed, he in any case taught us one important thing: however rich Virgil's works may be, and how many different layers of meaning they may contain, a professional Epicurean philosopher would not recognise himself or his ideal in them. Epicurean political philosophy, at least in its more technical and nuanced sense, does not provide a key for a better understanding of Virgil's poems.

6.2. Horace

6.2.1. This basically negative conclusion concerning the presence of the Epicurean ideal of an 'unnoticed life' in Virgil's work may lead to a certain caution regarding Horace. For indeed, whereas we know that Virgil (at least for some time) kept in close touch with the circle of Philodemus, we can be far less certain about Horace's connections to the same group. He became associated with several members of Philodemus' circle, to be sure, and cherished warm feelings of friendship for them,⁴⁵ but it is clear of course that such individual relationships do not necessarily presuppose membership of the Epicurean school. Nor do the *Herculaneum papyri* offer confirmation of such membership.⁴⁶ Furthermore, even if Horace was influenced by Lucretius,⁴⁷ this influence appears to have been far less dominant than in Virgil's case.

Nonetheless, Horace—unlike Virgil—explicitly presents himself as *Epicuri de grege porcum* (*epist.* 1.4.16). It has become the *communis opinio*, however, that this ironic phrase should be understood in the context of the whole letter and does not point to a formal adherence to an Epicurean school.⁴⁸ If one still continues to accept an 'Epicurean phase'

⁴⁵ See, e.g., *sat.* 1.5.39–44 and 93 (with C.J. Classen (1973) on the theme of friendship in the whole poem); 1.10.81; *carm.* 1.3.5–8. Philodemus himself is mentioned only once, in *sat.* 1.2.121, where he is quoted as a poet rather than as an Epicurean philosopher; cf. Q. Cataudella (1950).

⁴⁶ Whereas Körte's emendation Οὐ[εργίλιε] in *PHerc.* 1082 proved right (cf. *supra* p. 157, n. 6), his conjecture [ἽΟρᾶ]τιε in *PHerc.* 253 should in all probability be rejected in favour of [Πλώ]τιε; see M. Gigante (1973), and recently again A. Tsakirópoulou-Summers (1998).

⁴⁷ See esp. *sat.* 1.5.101 ~ Lucretius, 5.82 and 6.58; see also B. Rochette (2001) on *sat.* 1.3.99–112 (with further bibliography).

⁴⁸ See, e.g., O. Gigon (1977), 508: "Diese Verse sind gerade nicht epikureisch, wie

in Horace's life, one often situates it shortly after Philippi. In this view—once popular but now more and more abandoned⁴⁹—Horace would have found in Epicurean philosophy a rational cure for his disillusion, but he soon understood the shortcomings of the Epicurean doctrine and again left it for a different (more Stoic) view. In this context one often speaks of a real 'conversion' on the basis of *carm.* 1,34⁵⁰ where Horace relates how a thunder that came from a clear sky (thus 'refuting' Lucretius, 6,400–401) forced him to reject Epicurean philosophy as an *insaniens sapientia*. It is much more likely, however, that *carm.* 1,34, just like the self-characterisation *Epicuri de grege porcum*, rather illustrates an attitude of ironic distancing.⁵¹ At the same time, both texts also show a certain degree of congeniality (whether or not superficial) with Epicureanism. For Horace's irony can only be efficient when the self-portrait he offers can be recognised by his readers. In consequence, the Epicurean flavour of some of his poems can be regarded as one (and only one) aspect of his *persona* as a poet.

6.2.2. Such Epicurean flavour appears on many pages of Horace's poems. Again and again indeed, Horace introduces and varies motifs that have been interpreted as references to, or echoes of, Epicurean doctrine:⁵² the theme of frugality,⁵³ based on the limitation of desires,⁵⁴ the praise of quiet country life,⁵⁵ the rejection of vain political ambitions,⁵⁶ and the exhortation to enjoy the pleasures of the moment.⁵⁷ It

auch Horaz nur darum sich selbstironisch Epikureer nennen kann, weil er es ernsthaft nicht ist."; cf. also K. Buechner (1969), 459–460 and K. Gantar (1972), 6–7.

⁴⁹ It has recently been defended by P. Grimal (1993).

⁵⁰ See the bibliography in H.P. Syndikus (2001), 294.

⁵¹ Cf. also W.D. Lebek (1981), 2054.

⁵² See in general N.W. DeWitt (1939); J. Ferguson (1990), 2268–2269; M. Erler (1994a), 372–373.

⁵³ See, e.g., *sat.* 1,1,59–60 and 74–75; 1,6,110–118; 2,2,70–81; 2,2,110 (*contentus parvo*) and 116–123; *carm.* 2,16,13–16; 3,1,25; 3,16,43–44; see also C.J. Classen (1978) on Horace's criticism of a perverted interpretation of Epicurean philosophy in *sat.* 2,4.

⁵⁴ See, e.g., *sat.* 1,1,49–51; 1,1,92 and 106–107; 1,2,111; cf. *carm.* 3,16,39–40 and O. Gigon (1977), 448.

⁵⁵ See, e.g., *sat.* 2,6,1–5 and 59–117; *carm.* 2,16,37; *epist.* 1,10,1–25; 1,14; 1,16,1–16; cf. in general J.-M. André (1966), 455–499.

⁵⁶ See, e.g., *sat.* 1,4,26; 1,6,51–52 and 129; 1,10,84; 2,3,78; 2,6,18; *epist.* 1,19,37–38; 2,2,206–207.

⁵⁷ See, e.g., *carm.* 1,9,13–24; 1,11,8 (*carpe diem*); 2,16,25–26; *epist.* 1,4,12–14; 1,11,22–23; see, however, also P. Merlan (1949).

is important to note that all of these motifs, which can also be found in Virgil, usually occur in a context that greatly differs from that of the *Eclogues* or the *Georgics*, and which admittedly is closer to Epicureanism, namely, a context of *Seelenheilung* dominated by frankness⁵⁸ and protreptic⁵⁹ moral advice.

Yet, there is no need to bother Siro a second time. For in most cases, Horace's presentation and interpretation of these general philosophical motifs is at least as tributary to poetical traditions as to orthodox Epicurean doctrine.⁶⁰ Even more importantly, these motifs are usually combined with other elements that are far less Epicurean (and are sometimes even diametrically opposed to the Epicurean point of view). In that sense, the presence of motifs like the attack on political ambitions or the praise of country life hardly suffices to arrive at conclusions regarding possible Epicurean influence, and in fact the picture of Horace as a convinced adherent of Epicurean philosophy is too often based on an analysis of such isolated motifs or (passages in) poems,⁶¹ which, of course, only yields biased and misleading results. A discussion of the whole *corpus* quickly shows that the opposites of the 'Epicurean' motifs are equally present in Horace. It is true that the pleasures of rural life are often praised, but it is equally true that Horace appears to love Rome as much as he does the country (*epist.* 1,8,12; *sat.* 2,7,28–29). And whereas he more than once blames bad political ambitions, he also likes to underline his own successful association with influential politicians.⁶² Finally, if he wishes to retire to a corner of the world (*angulus terrarum*; *carm.* 2,6,13–14), he also insists that hidden valour hardly differs from buried idleness (*carm.* 4,9,29–30: *paulum sepultae distat inertiae celata virtus*).

As examples of such tension between opposed poles can easily be multiplied, it is not surprising that commentators have also pointed to

⁵⁸ N.W. DeWitt (1935) and A.K. Michels (1944b).

⁵⁹ See, e.g., L. Alfonsi (1949) on *carm.* 2,6 and A. Traina (1991), 300 on *epist.* 1.

⁶⁰ Cf. also K. Buechner (1969), 460: "Les thèmes de la retraite et de la frugalité ainsi que d'autres sont présentés d'une façon tellement lyrique qu'il n'est pas possible d'y prouver un épicurisme d'Horace".

⁶¹ It is striking that even in the so-called 'Roman Odes' at the outset of the third book, one often points to Epicurean influence—see, e.g., M. von Albrecht (1982/4); J.M. André (1969); P. Grimal (1975)—even though their general scope is far from an accurate expression of the Epicurean point of view.

⁶² See *epist.* 1,20,23; *sat.* 1,9,43–45; 2,1,75–76; 2,6,40–58; cf. also the interesting study of R.G. Mayer (1995) on Horace's *moyen de parvenir*.

Stoic⁶³ or Academic⁶⁴ influences. The combination of different motifs which makes Horace such a virtuoso and brilliant poet, renders him in a philosophical perspective an elusive, Protean figure who, due to the fact that he resists all other classifications, is all too often labelled 'eclectic'.⁶⁵ Even worse, his eclecticism would have been based on a study of doxographic works (such as that of Arius Didymus),⁶⁶ as if Horace, who studied in the Academy (*epist.* 2,2,43–45) needed such sources to become familiar with the general philosophical tenets he mentions in his poems. His own disclaimer of full adherence to any philosophical system (*epist.* 1,1,14: *nullius addictus iurare in verba magistri*) is well known. In his enquiry into what is true and seemly (*verum et decens*; 11), he now adopts a more Stoic course, then again slips back into the precepts of Aristippus (16–19). The whole passage strikingly illustrates Horace's independence of judgement. Porphyrio's paraphrase of it is worth quoting in full, since it is to my mind still one of the best starting points for an accurate understanding of Horace's auctorial strategies:

Nulli se sectae addictum ait, sed ex omnibus quidquid optimum sit electurum esse promittit. (Hor. epist. 1,1,13; p. 317,17–18 Hold.)

"He says that he does not attach himself to any school, but promises to select all the best from all of them."

There are only two terms which perhaps need further explanation. First *optimum*: Horace's selection of material is not merely conditioned by what he considers to be the best philosophical insight but also—even primarily—by its relevance, its adaptability, and the poetical opportunities it provides with regard to the addressee of, and the circumstances described in, a particular poem.⁶⁷ Second, of course, *electurum*: is Horace an eclectic after all? Much depends on what is understood by the term. One could call Horace 'eclectic', but only in the strictly literal sense of the word, without any philosophical connotation. He was not an

⁶³ For the combination of Epicurean and Stoic material in the *Odes*, see esp. the valuable study of W.D. Lebek (1981); on the *Epistles*, contrast the Epicurean interpretation proposed by M.N. Porter Packer (1941) with the Stoic one elaborated by G. Maurach (1968).

⁶⁴ See esp. K. Gantar (1972); cf. R.S. Kilpatrick (1986), xviii–xix, 5–6 and 106, and already C.C. Coulter (1943).

⁶⁵ The classic study is W.S. Maguinness (1938); cf. also A. Rabe (1930).

⁶⁶ F. Della Corte (1991); cf. also D. Armstrong (1989), 117–119.

⁶⁷ Cf. C.W. Macleod (1979a), 21–22 on the *Odes*.

eclectic in the sense in which Zeller⁶⁸ understood the term, nor in the philosophical sense the term received in Antiquity.⁶⁹ Both these meanings remain inadequate because they presuppose (either indirectly, or directly) a coherent and systematic philosophical project as an end in itself. This, however, was completely alien to Horace, who selected philosophical doctrines as interesting material for his poetry (cf. *ars* 309–311). It is only in this sense that Horace can be regarded as an eclectic.

6.2.3. I have dwelt on this problem in some detail because the conclusion gathered from this discussion has an interesting implication: even if the presence of a particular philosophical motif in one or more poems of Horace is hardly informative about the poet's general philosophical position, his 'eclectic' approach makes it justified to connect such a motif with a philosophical background and even, if it is sufficiently specific, to trace it back to a certain philosophical school. The doctrine of the equality of all faults (attacked in *sat.* 1,3,96–98) is undeniably Stoic, that of the imperturbability of the gods (*sat.* 1,5,101) undoubtedly Epicurean. It is clear that this opens up new possibilities for further research. For the doctrine of *λάτρε βιώσας*, in its strict form of a plea for an 'unnoticed life', is sufficiently specific to trace back potential echoes of it in Horace to Epicurus' philosophy.

Ferguson⁷⁰ mentions four instances where the doctrine occurs. They are all to be found in the *Epistles*: 1,11,7–10 and 29–30; 1,16,15; 1,17,10 and 1,18,103.⁷¹ Each of these four passages deserves to be examined in detail. It should be clear by now that our question must not be whether or not Horace consistently endorses the Epicurean ideal of an 'unnoticed life'. We already know that he does not. The question is rather [1] whether these passages can be regarded as echoes of the Epicurean doctrine, and, if yes, [2] how they are used by Horace and which function they have in the specific context of the poem.

⁶⁸ (1909), 547–564.

⁶⁹ See P. Donini (1988).

⁷⁰ (1990), 2268–2269, closely following N.W. DeWitt (1939), 132. The latter's reference to *sat.* 2,6,62 is irrelevant.

⁷¹ An anticipation of the motif can already be found in *epist.* 1,1,5 (*latet abditus agro*). On the meaning of the term *furtim* in *epist.* 1,1,18, which has often been interpreted as a reference to the maxim *λάτρε βιώσας*, see A. Traina (1991), 291–292 (with further literature).

a) The short *Epistle to Bullatius*⁷² has a fairly sunny beginning. Horace shows himself curious about Bullatius' experiences during his stay on the Greek islands and in Asia Minor (1,11,1–5). The first impression of the reader is one of light-hearted conversation among close friends. But suddenly, dark clouds blot out the sun, as the focus shifts from the brilliant centres of attraction to the insignificant little town Lebedus (6). This change of perspective arouses feelings of longing in Horace himself:

*scis Lebedus quid sit? Gabius desertior atque
Fidenis vicus. tamen illic vivere vellem
oblitusque meorum obliviscendus et illis
Neptunum procul e terra spectare furentem.*
(*epist.* 1,11,7–10)

“You know what Lebedus is? A town more desolate than Gabii and Fidenae: yet there would I love to live, and forgetting my friends and by them forgotten, gaze from the land on Neptune’s distant rage.” (transl. H.R. Fairclough)

First of all, it is important to place these verses in their context. As appears from the following verses, this dream of a retired life in a deserted hole like Lebedus is not presented to Bullatius as a permanent ideal. At best, he can regard it as a temporary solution. As such, it can be compared with an inn on the road, which can offer to the drenched traveller a welcome refreshment, but not a permanent residence (11–12),⁷³ or with a warm bath, which may well assuage the discomfort of a frozen person but will never give him a *fortunata vita* (12–14). Such happiness does not depend on one’s place of abode, but on a correct mental disposition, and can thus be reached in Rome as well as in Ulubrae. This *topos* is elaborated in the remainder of the letter (17–30).

It is clear, then, that verses 7–10 appear to be rather isolated in the *Epistle*. Their content and tone differ from the preceding verses and they are immediately retracted in what follows. Can they be regarded as a far echo of the Epicurean ideal that stealthily creeps into a discourse to which it in the end remains alien? In spite of the clear reference to Lucretius, 2,1–2 in verse 10, the passage does not show a truly Epicurean point of view. First of all, it should be recalled that Epicurus did not need lonely, forgotten places such as Lebedus in order to live unnoticed. His ideal can perfectly be reached in Athens as well.

⁷² On the significant meaning of the name, see V. Estevez (1961), 36.

⁷³ One may recall Epictetus, 2,23,36–39.

Secondly, and more importantly, line 9 gives an interpretation of ‘being unnoticed’ that is diametrically opposed to the Epicurean perspective. Horace’s withdrawal is radically interpreted as a complete solitude, even without friends. This recalls rather the isolation of the Corycian *senex* in Virgil’s *Georgics* than the cheerful *contubernium* of the Epicurean Garden. Finally, the motivating force that drives Horace to long for the solitude of Lebedus is apparently not rational. Terms like *imbre lutoque aspersus* (11–12), *frigus* (13) and *iactaverit* (15) rather seem to point to a condition of anguish or unhappiness. In any case, the retirement to Lebedus seems to be rooted in emotions, rather than based on a well-considered rational choice. It has been interpreted as evidence of the melancholia of a Republican-minded exile,⁷⁴ of the disillusion caused by the political troubles of the years 21–20 B.C.,⁷⁵ or of purely poetic and unreal feelings.⁷⁶ Whichever interpretation one prefers, the fact remains that the verses evoke a world that is strongly at odds with an Epicurean outlook. In consequence, I would hesitate to regard them as an echo of the Epicurean ideal of *λάτρε βιώσας*.

b) The starting point of *epist.* 16 to Quinctius is the addressee’s apparent interest in the yield of Horace’s Sabine estate (1,16,1–4). Before paying attention to more important, moral matters, Horace, by way of anticipation,⁷⁷ briefly and rather vaguely describes his estate, in terms which may recall the primitive way of life of the *aurea aetas*.⁷⁸ The whole section on the simple pleasures he enjoys there (5–14) culminates in two verses that give the previous description an unexpected turn:

*hae latebrae dulces, etiam, si credis, amoenae,
incolumem tibi me praestant Septembribus horis.
(epist. 1,16,15–16)*

“This retreat, so sweet—yes, believe me, so bewitching—keeps me, my friend, in sound health in September’s heat.” (transl. H.R. Fairclough)

This is a nice conclusion to Horace’s evasive answer. The most important fruit his estate yields, and the only one worth mentioning, now

⁷⁴ R.S. Kilpatrick (1986), 80–83.

⁷⁵ P. Gros (1974), 371–374.

⁷⁶ K. Buechner (1969), 460. It has even been regarded as a mere witticism that should not be taken too seriously (R. Waltz (1935), 315).

⁷⁷ The *Epistle* primarily deals with the opposition *esse-videri* and the definition of the good man. Aspects of the same theme are already present in Horace’s discussion of his own estate; cf. esp. M.J. McGann (1960), 207.

⁷⁸ L. Voit (1975).

turns out to be the only one in which Quinctius indirectly can share, that is, Horace's own good health. Of course, Quinctius' interest in this particular fruit, and his 'share' in it, presupposes his sincere friendship with the poet (cf. the meaningful juxtaposition *tibi me* in 16). If he is really concerned for Horace's well being, this answer will do; if not, the rest is none of his business.

If this is indeed the main point of the two verses, what can still be the place of the Epicurean doctrine of an 'unnoticed life' in such a context? Everything of course depends on the interpretation of one word, namely, *latebrae*. According to *OLD*, the term can have two meanings that are relevant in this context:

- [1] *a place chosen for concealment; a hiding place*. This meaning comes close to the ideal of λάθε βιώσας, although it is fair to say that even when the term is understood in this sense, it is at best a vague echo of the Epicurean maxim. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that *latebrae* is also used by Seneca in an Epicurean context.⁷⁹
- [2] *a place of escape; a refuge*. It is this meaning which is connected with our passage in *OLD*. The term *incolumem* also points in that direction, and obviously denotes corporeal health rather than Epicurean ἀσφάλεια.

The latter observation is important, since it gives us an unambiguous key to a more correct understanding of the term *latebrae*. What precisely does Horace want to escape from at his estate? It is neither the troubles of the political world, nor the disadvantages which a great fame entails, but the *Septembribus horis*.⁸⁰ Horace's sweet *latebrae* provide protection against the unhealthy season of autumn. Accordingly, the emphasis in this context is not upon reaching tranquillity of mind, nor even by attaining ἀσφάλεια ἐξ ἡσυχίας, but upon maintaining corporeal health. The whole passage, then, has nothing to do with the Epicurean ideal of λάθε βιώσας.

c) *Epist.* 17 to Scaeva concerns the question of how to deal with more powerful persons (1,17,2). Horace's actual advice on this topic, however, only appears at the end of the *Epistle* and moreover remains rather vague and general (43–62). The letter opens with a functional self-characterisation of Horace as a friend who is still a learner but yet

⁷⁹ See *benef.* 4,13,1; in *epist.* 19,2, it is connected with *oblivio*; cf. also 82,4.

⁸⁰ Cf. also *epist.* 1,7,1–9.

might have something to say (1–5). This is an efficient pedagogical technique,⁸¹ which immediately indicates the general perspective in which the letter should be understood. We are entering a psychological context.

After these introductory verses, Horace begins his actual advice to Scaeva as follows:

*Si te grata quies et primam somnus in horam
delectat, si te pulvis strepitusque rotarum,
si laedit caupona, Ferentinum ire iubebo.
nam neque divitibus contingunt gaudia solis
nec vixit male qui natus moriensque fefellit.
si prodesse tuis pauloque benignius ipsum
te tractare voles, accedes siccus ad unctum.*
(*epist.* 1,17,6–12)

“If pleasant ease and sleep till sunrise be your delight, if dust and noise of wheels, or if tavern offend you, I shall order you off to Ferentinum. For joys fall not to the rich alone, and he has not lived amiss who from birth to death has passed unknown. But if you wish to help your friends and to treat yourself a little more generously, you in your hunger will make for a rich table.” (transl. H.R. Fairclough)

Scaeva thus immediately has to face a dilemma: either he can live an untroubled life at Ferentinum,⁸² or he can try to cherish some higher ambitions and rise higher on the social ladder. The first pole of this dilemma contains a clear reference to the ideal of an ‘unnoticed life’. In the culminating verse 10, the ideals of *λάθε βιώσας* and *λαθε ἀποβιώσας* are even juxtaposed. The formulation is specific enough to connect it with the Epicurean maxim. Here at last, we may find a clear echo of the Epicurean ideal.

The question remains, then, how this ideal is used in the poetic universe of this letter. First of all, the dilemma is interpreted in the light of Roman social life. The opposition is not between the ideal of *λάθε βιώσας* and a political career or a splendid reputation, but between an unnoticed life and a life as a *cliens* of more powerful patrons. This dilemma is further elaborated in what follows. At the outset, the opposition between the claims of Aristippus and Diogenes (13–32) presents itself as a reorientation of the dilemma. Aristippus’ choice

⁸¹ Cf. S. Harrison (1995), 51.

⁸² Ferentinum is usually regarded as one more example of a lonely town, such as Lebedus, Gabii, Fidenae, and Ulubrae. This view has recently been challenged by H. Solin (2000).

mutatis mutandis illustrates the second pole. That of Diogenes, however, does not resume the first one. The emphasis moves from the motif of an ‘unnoticed life’ to that of self-sufficiency. Even more, from Aristippus’ attack on, and refutation of, Diogenes’ claim of self-sufficiency (21–22) it quickly appears that the second dilemma should not be understood as a reorientation of the first one, but rather as an elaboration of its second pole. More schematically, there thus turn out to be not merely two, but three alternatives:

- an unnoticed life
- being the *cliens* of a powerful patron:
 - in the good way of Aristippus
 - in the bad way of Diogenes

Theoretically, there even exists a fourth possibility, that is, the life of a powerful politician itself, but this is beyond the reach of Scaeva (33–36) and thus hardly receives attention.

The previous analysis leads to an important conclusion. Even if the ideal of an ‘unnoticed life’ has soon disappeared from sight, it is never rejected. Just the opposite appears to be true. The example of Aristippus’ behaviour shows that the initial dilemma need not be a real dilemma. It is worth noting in this context that Horace himself easily combined elements of both poles, being a successful *cliens* of Maecenas (pole 2) while retaining the freedom to sleep until sunrise and to enjoy the quiet rest of his Sabine estate, far away from the noise of the roads and taverns (pole 1). In that sense, Horace’s Sabine estate is not only a symbol of the happiness of country life or of the good life as such,⁸³ but also of a successful life as a *cliens*.⁸⁴

If all of this is true, what might the function of a reference to the Epicurean ideals of *λάθῃ βιώσας* and *λάθῃ ἀποβιώσας* be in such a context? Why does Horace introduce these ideals, near the beginning of his letter, as opposed to another ideal with which they can after all be easily reconciled? Why, in short, does Horace create a dilemma which proves largely artificial? Perhaps, he does so in order to thematise a basic question which Scaeva has overlooked. The best parallel I can

⁸³ Cf. C.W. Macleod (1979b), 25.

⁸⁴ R.G. Mayer (1995), 293. One should note that Horace’s Sabine estate was probably not a simple farm; it could be compared to luxurious villas such as the *Villa dei papiri* at Herculaneum; see B.D. Frischer (1995).

think of is to be found in a famous passage of Xenophon's *Anabasis*, where he recalls how he went to Delphi and asked Apollo to whom among the gods he had to sacrifice and pray so as to ensure that he would achieve his journey in the best and safest possible way (3,1,6). When he returned to Socrates, the latter rebuked him because he had not first asked whether it were better for him to go or to stay (3,1,7). Xenophon thus proved to have given attention merely to questions of secondary importance, whereas the most crucial decision was taken in an inconsiderate way. Scaeva may have committed a similar mistake. He may have turned immediately to the question of how to deal with powerful patrons before having considered seriously whether or not such a life is to be preferred. Horace then tries to do for Scaeva what Socrates did for Xenophon, though in a more subtle way that is made possible by the concrete situation. Socrates was forced to confirm the words of Apollo and thus the rash decision of Xenophon. In this, he faced a *fait accompli* and thus could only rebuke his pupil, since he could no longer influence his decision. Horace finds himself in a much better pedagogical position. As Scaeva has not yet received a divine oracle which *de facto* confirms his choice, he can still reconsider his decision. As a result, a harsh rebuke can yield to a direct confrontation with the more fundamental questions Scaeva has to ask first. It now also becomes clear why the Epicurean alternative is mentioned first and receives more than twice the number of verses than the other alternative. For it is this pole that should especially be considered by Scaeva, and one should note that one-liners such as that of verse 10 may even add to the attractiveness of this alternative.⁸⁵ At the same time, it also becomes clear why Horace's more specific advice at the end of the letter remains so vague and general. It should be regarded as temporary, and can later be completed in a much more detailed way, after Scaeva has done his homework again.

By introducing quite emphatically, and near the beginning of his *Epistle*, the motif of an 'unnoticed life', Horace does *not* encourage Scaeva to live an Epicurean life. In this context, Horace is primarily interested in the motif because it perfectly suits his pedagogical purposes, since it enables him to raise crucial questions to which Scaeva should pay full attention. What is important is not so much which way of life Scaeva will finally adopt, but that his choice will be rational and

⁸⁵ Cf. S. Harrison (1995), 51–52.

well-considered rather than impulsive. If the reference to the ideal of an ‘unnoticed life’ can contribute to that end, it has successfully completed its function.

d) *Epistle* 18 to Lollius deals with the same theme as the Letter addressed to Scaeva. Accordingly, it is very significant that this Letter immediately begins with a whole series of concrete counsels, which generally wish to bring about an attitude of flexible independence that recalls Aristippus’ conduct as described in *epist.* 17.⁸⁶ One could say, then, that Lollius receives the kind of advice Scaeva could have received as well if he had done his homework correctly. As Lollius’ decision to associate with powerful patrons is not questioned through an initial dilemma, we are free to assume that he has looked before he leapt.

Yet, even in this letter, the ideal of an ‘unnoticed life’ is referred to when near the end of the *Epistle*, Horace recommends to study wise authors, enumerating possible questions to which Lollius should give attention (96–103). They all concern ethical topics and aim at tranquillity of mind. The last question reintroduces the ideal of an ‘unnoticed life’:

*quid pure tranquillet, honos an dulce lucellum
an secretum iter et fallentis semita vitae.
(epist. 1,18,102–103)*

“What gives you unruffled calm—honour, or the sweets of dear gain, or a secluded journey along the pathway of a life unnoticed?” (transl. H.R. Fairclough)

Even if the formulation is here somewhat less close to the maxim *λάθε βιώσας* than the one in *epist.* 1,17,10, the words *fallentis vitae* can still be regarded as a sufficiently clear reference to it. Moreover, the term *secretum* can be interpreted as an allusion to the Epicurean concern for *ἀσφάλεια*. All in all, one could recognise an echo of the Epicurean ideal here as well.

This conclusion immediately entails the question of the function of such a reference in the context of this letter. This function radically differs from the one it had in the previous letter. The Epicurean alternative is here introduced into a whole list of possible questions. It is important to see that these questions all belong to an old philosophical

⁸⁶ *Epist.* 18 is analysed in detail by H. Rohdich (1972) and L. Bowditch (1994); shorter discussions also in A. Noirlalise (1952), 360–362; M.J. McGann (1969), 77–82 and R.S. Kilpatrick (1986), 43–55.

tradition. In that sense, it is not surprising that the ideal of an ‘unnoticed life’ is now not connected with typically Roman social customs, but opposed to much more general and traditional goals. This does not imply, however, that these general questions are no longer relevant in Horace’s day.⁸⁷ They remain important, not only at the very beginning, when one has to think about which course one should adopt in one’s life, but also after that basic decision has been taken. Permanent tranquillity of mind presupposes uninterrupted reflection on these fundamental questions. Therefore, they are no less relevant for Lollius than for Scaeva.

And thus, a combination of *epist.* 17 and 18 results in a beautiful circular structure. The more concrete advice, placed in the centre, forms the point of reference for the more fundamental questions which are placed at the outset (of *epist.* 17) and end (of *epist.* 18), and which have to support the whole process from beginning to end. There is only one element which even precedes the basic dilemma in *epist.* 17, that is, the self-characterisation of Horace as a learner. Similarly, there is only one element which still follows the fundamental questions of *epist.* 18, that is, a new self-portrait of Horace, no longer characterised as a learner but as someone who has reached the final goal. And it is important to underline that this goal is not an unnoticed life—there is no clear reference to this ideal in the concluding verses of *epist.* 18—but tranquillity of mind. In both letters, the Epicurean doctrine is connected with important questions, but while it is twice taken seriously as a possible alternative that at least deserves consideration, it is not recommended as the ideal that is to be absolutely preferred.

6.2.4. To conclude, two passages in Horace’s works contain more or less clear echoes of the Epicurean doctrine of *λάθε βιώσας*. This does not make Horace a confirmed adherent to this Epicurean ideal.⁸⁸ Of

⁸⁷ *Contra* R. Mayer (1986), 66 on verse 100: as Horace formulates the question, it “was for contemporary philosophy not a live issue any longer”. But the question is treated by Plutarch in his short work *An virtus doceri possit*, and is of paramount importance in the works of Philo of Alexandria, who connects the traditional trichotomy διδασκαλία—φύσις—ἀσκησις with the three patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; cf. also Ovid, *trist.* 1,6,23–27 and Seneca, *dial.* 8,4,2.

⁸⁸ Nor was he influenced on this particular point by the Stoic Athenodorus (a thesis put forward by M.J. McGann (1969), 24–30; cf. also O.A.W. Dilke (1981), 1848–1850). For Horace did not need such a specific source, and moreover, the element of usefulness which Athenodorus combined with his Stoic interpretation of the sequestered life is for the most part absent from Horace’s poems.

course not. The two passages are only a minute part of a much richer whole and the philosophical ideal to which they refer is isolated from its original context and introduced into a poetic universe where it has to play its proper part. Accordingly, one may well conclude with E. Fraenkel⁸⁹ that “[t]he principle of *λάθῃ βιώσας* is not a key that opens every gate”.

6.3. Ovid

6.3.1. When the chorus in the *parodos* of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* is about to sing of the sacrificial murder of Iphigeneia, for a while the account is interrupted in order to ponder the omnipotence of Zeus. In the so-called Zeus-hymn, it refers to the general law of the supreme god, that “wisdom comes by suffering” (*πάθει μάθος*; 177). At first sight, the truth of these wise and famous words of the chorus was once again confirmed many centuries later, when Ovid began to write his exilic poems.

By far for the greatest part of his life, Ovid enjoyed being in the public eye, as a poet of brilliant and daring *Spielereien*. At that time, he was not concerned at all with Epicurus’ rational world view, nor about his advice to ‘live unnoticed’. It is true that he once explicitly refers to Lucretius in fairly positive terms (*am.* 1,15,23–24; cf. also *trist.* 2,425–426, which, however, dates from the period of his exile), but he generally uses the latter’s sublimity in a humorous, ironic, and/or polemical context.⁹⁰

The turning point came rather unexpectedly in 8 A.D., when he was relegated by Augustus to Tomis on the Black Sea. He was forced to give up his refined and carefree life as a poet in a highly cultured literate milieu in order to assume a harsh existence on the border of the Roman empire. It is clear that his earlier fame made this radical change even worse (*trist.* 4,1,67–68). In the second elegy of book 1 of the *Tristia*, he opposes Tomis to famous cities such as Athens and Alexandria and to the cities of Asia (1,2,77–82). This opposition recalls the glaring contrast in Horace’s *epist.* 1,11 between the centres of attraction on the

⁸⁹ (1957), 320.

⁹⁰ See J.F. Miller (1996/7). Ovid’s *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris* have been interpreted as a polemic against Lucretius’ attack on love; see J. Shulman (1980/1). On Ovid’s use of Lucretius in his pre-exilic poetry (esp. the *Metamorphoses*), see also S.M. Wheeler (1995); F. Lecocq (1999) and E. Flores (1999).

Greek islands and in Asia Minor and a deserted hole such as Lebedus (cf. *supra*, 6.2.3a). In Ovid, however, the opposition receives a radically different meaning. Tomis is anything but a temporary refuge where the poet can acquire tranquillity of mind and wishes to live, “forgetting his friends and being forgotten by them”. On the contrary, it is painted in the dullest colours, and appears as a dire necessity rather than as a melancholic dream or an attractive shelter. In such conditions, the support of friends proves to be of paramount importance. Moreover, Ovid makes it perfectly clear that the extreme geographical, climatic, and social conditions of the region preclude all tranquillity and rest. Pleasant *otium* belongs to his previous life at Rome (*trist.* 2,224; 3,2,9; cf. 3,12,17), and is not possible at Tomis (4,10,105), where *otia* turn out to be *infelicia* (*Pont.* 4,2,39–40). At other places, exiles can perhaps enjoy the safety of an unnoticed life, but he alone is forced to be both exile and soldier (*Pont.* 1,8,7–8). With this observation, Ovid not only rejects the consolation offered by a traditional philosophical argument,⁹¹ but also prevents his readers from thinking that he might well be able to continue his previous delightful life. Whatever he may experience in his place of exile, it is unlikely to be the pleasures of an Epicurean *otium*.

This severe *πάθος*, however, seems to have brought about a new *μάθος*. In his *Tristia*, Ovid repeatedly expresses his wish that he would previously have remained unknown (1,9b,19; 5,7b,13–14; cf. 5,5,59 on his wife). In line with this desire, he more than once assures us that he has given up his previous ambitions. He pursues rest rather than fame (4,1,3: *exul eram, requiesque mihi, non fama petita est*) and explicitly adds that he would prefer to remain unknown to all (5,12,41–42; cf. 3,1,80 and *Pont.* 1,1,9–10 on his poems). In *trist.* 4,8,5–14, he describes more concretely how he would conceive of his old age, enjoying private *otium* in the country, together with his family and friends. Has Ovid finally become an Epicurean at Tomis? In Ferguson’s view, there are indeed many references to Epicurus’ doctrine in the exilic poems which “strongly suggest Epicureanism’s influence on Ovid”.⁹² He concludes:

“I suspect an exposure to Epicureanism in Ovid’s youth, leading to a general commitment to an Epicurean way of life. I do not see any evidence of membership in an Epicurean confraternity. As Ovid grew away from his youth his Epicureanism sat more lightly on him; other

⁹¹ M.H.T. Davisson (1983), 181.

⁹² (1990), 2272.

interests developed, and for poetic or other purposes he turned to other philosophies. When he was broken by exile he reverted to the 'religion' of his younger days, which he had never wholly lost. It is not an uncommon experience."⁹³

This, however, is a far too rash conclusion, based on a series of disconnected passages that are isolated from their original contexts. Many other passages can indeed be found where Ovid strikes a completely different note, and there is absolutely no reason to prefer the former to the latter. He often underlines, for instance, that he is and remains a famous poet⁹⁴ and equally often even identifies himself with his *fama*.⁹⁵ That he generally continues to attach great importance to fame appears from other passages as well. Particularly illuminating in this context is *trist.* 1,9,53–55, where his sad wish that his own talent would have remained unknown is balanced by the sincere pleasure he derives from the fact that his friend's *ingenium* has not remained unnoticed. His wife, too, deserves great fame (4,3,73–84; 5,5,49–60; 5,14,4–14) and his moral advice to remain unknown (in 3,4a; cf. *infra*, 6.3.2) is balanced by his great enthusiasm for immortal fame in the elegy addressed to Perilla (3,7,49–54).⁹⁶ As a whole, the *Tristia* should certainly not be regarded as a passionate plea for an unnoticed life. All of the passages discussed thus far are merely one voice in a polyphonic whole.⁹⁷

Moreover, Ovid's preference for an unnoticed *otium* is not based on Epicurean arguments. In the famous autobiographical elegy at the end of book 4, he mentions two reasons that explain this preference. First, both his bodily constitution and his mind were incapable of enduring the great efforts, which an ambitious life entails (4,10,37–38; cf. 3,2,9–10). Second, the *otium* of a sequestered life is a necessary condition for his life as a poet (4,10,39–40; cf. 1,1,41). Nowhere can we find any trace of a more theoretical or philosophical background. There is neither reference to a well-considered *calculus* nor can there be found reflections on ἀσφάλεια, on unlimited desires, on the unhappiness of politicians, etc. Even when he became older, Ovid never became an Epicurean.

⁹³ (1990), 2273.

⁹⁴ E.g. *trist.* 2,116–120; 3,3,77–80; 4,10,121–132; see also A. Videau-Delibes (1991), 452–453.

⁹⁵ J.-M. Claassen (1990), 109.

⁹⁶ Cf. also Ph. De Lacy (1947), 159–160.

⁹⁷ One could further point to *Pont.* 1,5,43–44, where idle leisure is equated with death.

6.3.2. Yet, there remains one elegy that requires special attention, namely, *trist.* 3,4a. There, Ovid addresses a faithful friend, and gives him the advice to live for himself, unnoticed and unenvied. This moral advice, which constitutes the central theme of the poem, is repeated no less than four times:

<i>vive tibi et longe nomina magna fuge.</i> <i>vive tibi, quantumque potes, praelustria vita.</i> (4–5)	“Live for yourself, flee afar from great names! Live for yourself, and to your utmost power shun glittering renown.”
<i>crede mihi, bene qui latuit, bene vixit, et intra fortunam debet quisque manere suam.</i> (25–26)	“Believe me, he who hides well his life, lives well; each man ought to remain within his proper position.”
<i>tu quoque formida nimium sublimia semper, propositique, precor, contrahe vela tui.</i> (31–32)	“And you too, dread constantly that which is too lofty and furl the sails of your intent.”
<i>vive sine invidia, mollesque inglorius annos exige, amicitias et tibi iunge pares.</i> (43–44)	“Live unenvied, pass years of comfort apart from fame, and unite to you friends like yourself.”

(transl. A.L. Wheeler, modified)

These four passages together express in a concise way different, closely connected aspects of a particular way of life. This way of life:

- [1] *is self-centred*: the short phrase *vive tibi* (4–5), twice emphatically placed at the beginning of the verse, offers the most fundamental perspective, which is made more concrete in what follows.
- [2] *avoids extremes*: Ovid’s friend should not fly too high; he should avoid the lofty heights of fame (4–5 and 31–32) and remain within the bounds of his own station (25–26).
- [3] *avoids envy*: (43: *sine invidia*); this can be regarded as a direct consequence of [2].
- [4] *does not preclude friendship*: friends, however, should be *pares* (44); *φιλία καθ’ ὑπεροχήν* is to be avoided, in line with the general advice of the whole poem.
- [5] *remains unknown*: (25; cf. also *inglorius* in 43); this is no doubt the most direct formulation of the general ideal of an ‘unnoticed life’ in Ovid.

This advice is further supported through a whole series of illustrative examples, which are taken from the experience of daily life (9–12 and 17–18) and from the world of mythology (19–24 and 27–30). This rep-

etition of both general advice and concrete examples not only clarifies and concretises the advocated way of life, but also makes Ovid's advice more urgent. Moreover, this advice turns out to rest on personal experience (3: *usibus edocto*). Ovid's own life is the strongest argument in support of his plea, for as long as he lived together with his friend, he did not face any problem (15–16).⁹⁸

Does Ovid, then, defend in this elegy the Epicurean ideal of an 'unnoticed life' with all of its implications? The importance of friendship and the avoidance of envy are obviously in line with the Epicurean position, but these topics are far too general to be regarded as typically Epicurean.⁹⁹ The advice *vive tibi* has been connected with Philodemus, *De elect.* col. XXI, 11–12 (ἀντὶ μόνον χοῖται) and Lucretius, 3,684, but neither offers a good parallel.¹⁰⁰ A much better parallel would have been Lactantius, *inst.* 3,17,42 (= fr. 523 Us.: *sibi quemque consulere*).¹⁰¹ But especially important in the context of our study is of course the ideal of an 'unnoticed life' expressed in 25. Nearly all of the commentators connect this verse with the Epicurean maxim λάθε βιώσας.¹⁰² Even Usener inserts the passage in his collection under fr. 551. Now taken in itself and without consideration of the surrounding context, the verse can

⁹⁸ Most editors prefer Faber's conjecture *mecum vixi* (in 15) to the reading *tecum vixi* offered by all of the manuscripts. Faber's reading, however, is unnecessary and even at odds with Ovid's own advice. The fact that one lives *for* oneself does not necessarily imply that one only lives *with* oneself; *sibi vivere* is not *secum vivere*. Ovid himself advises to choose friends like oneself (44). Accordingly, he is perfectly able to life for himself and yet enjoy the company of friends. The reading *tecum vixi* only presupposes that Ovid's addressee does not belong to the class of powerful persons, which is unproblematic of course, since the only one who is truly powerful at that time was Augustus. The objection of G. Luck (1977), 186 ("Ein längeres Zusammenleben der beiden Freunde ist nach 1 f. wenig wahrscheinlich") is far from decisive, since the reading *tecum* is more than sufficiently supported by the phrase *care quidem semper*. One could finally note in passing that the combination of *sibi vivere* and friendship recalls the Epicurean position (cf. Lactantius, *inst.* 3,17,42 = fr. 540 Us.).

⁹⁹ The theme of friendship was important in all philosophical schools. On the avoidance of envy in politics, cf., for instance, the position of a convinced Platonist (and public-spirited philosopher) such as Plutarch: *An seni* 787CD; *Praec. ger. reip.* 804DE and 806C.

¹⁰⁰ Philodemus' argument is probably about the sage's self-sufficiency, in particular in financial affairs; cf. G. Indelli – V. Tsouna-McKirahan (1995), 218; the passage in Lucretius belongs to an *argumentum ex absurditate*.

¹⁰¹ Cf. also Lactantius, *inst.* 3,17,4 and 39 (= fr. 581 Us.): *omnia sapientem sua causa facere*; Cicero, *fam.* 7,12,2.

¹⁰² See, e.g., Ph. De Lacy (1947), 160; F. Della Corte (1973), 266; G. Luck (1977), 187; U. Bernhardt (1986), 31; A. Videau-Delibes (1991), 406; R. Degl'Innocenti Pierini (1992), 155; G.D. Williams (1994), 128.

indeed be regarded as a beautiful poetic expression of the Epicurean ideal of an ‘unnoticed life’. When placed back into the whole of the poem, however, its relevance should primarily be sought elsewhere.

The interpretation proposed by A. Videau-Delibes¹⁰³ offers a good point of departure:

“L’enseignement délivré, généralement dédié aux amis fidèles en récompense ou dans l’espoir de leur fidélité, constitue en même temps un appel à la compassion. Les trois fonctions sont concomitantes.”

Ovid’s moral advice, then, can be understood as a strategic move to maintain friendship from distant Tomis. There is, however, much more at stake in this elegy. To the three functions mentioned by Videau-Delibes, I would like to add three further elements.

a) First of all, several commentators rightly emphasise that Ovid’s direct source of inspiration is not Epicurus, but Horace.¹⁰⁴ The whole elegy shows striking parallels with Horace’s *carm.* 2,10, and, more importantly, the ideal of an ‘unnoticed life’ can be found in *epist.* 1,17 and 18 (cf. *supra*, 6.2.3c–d). This observation is important. Ovid does not wish to recommend in this elegy an Epicurean ideal, but rather tries to use an ideal that is defended by Horace against Horace himself. Indeed, the whole poem can be interpreted as a polemical attack against the advice Horace gave in *epist.* 1,17 and 18.¹⁰⁵ These letters are about the question of how to deal with more powerful persons, and merely allude to the more fundamental question of which course one should adopt in one’s life. It is to this more basic issue that Ovid in *trist.* 3,4a returns, proposing his own answer, which radically differs from that proposed by Horace, and making clear that his view rests on a much firmer foundation. For whereas Horace presents himself—even if merely for pedagogical purposes—still as a learner (*epist.* 1,17,1–5), Ovid gives his advice on the basis of personal experience (*trist.* 3,4a,3). The strong emphasis on the ideal of an ‘unnoticed life’ in this elegy should thus primarily be understood from a polemical, anti-Horatian perspective.

b) But there is more. Commentators on Ovid quite surprisingly never point to another striking parallel with Horace, namely, *epist.* 1,6,56–57:

¹⁰³ (1991), 406.

¹⁰⁴ G. Luck (1977), 187; G.D. Williams (1994), 129; cf. also R. Degl’Innocenti Pierini (1992), 156–157.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. the more elaborate analysis of R. Degl’Innocenti Pierini (1992), 155–158.

*si bene qui cenat bene vivit, lucet, eamus
quo ducit gula, etc.*

“If he who dines well, lives well, then—it is daybreak, let’s be off, whither the palate guides us.” (transl. H.R. Fairclough)

Horace here introduces one of the different ideals of life, which are juxtaposed in the second part of this letter, and goes on to describe the implications that such a choice entails. Ovid’s phrase *bene qui latuit bene vixit*, at least formally, remains very close to Horace’s verse, but still provides it with a completely different twist. The transition from present to perfect tense, no doubt *metri causa*, takes into account the whole course of life, giving Ovid’s moral advice an almost Solonic flavour. Horace’s hypothetical ideal is categorically (*crede mihi*)¹⁰⁶ replaced by a better alternative. In that sense, not only the emphasis on the ideal of an ‘unnoticed life’, but even its concrete poetic expression should be understood as a polemic against Horace.

Furthermore, this observation has an important implication. Horace, who is the author of such unbecoming verses, is still one of the poets favoured by Augustus. Ovid, on the other hand, who, partly because of his *Ars amatoria*, fell out of favour with Augustus, is able to use the same formal matrix as Horace had done, but Ovid used it in order to write more high-principled verses. Who, after all, should be regarded as the intemperate guzzler and who as the sober poet?

c) Thus, the whole elegy also illustrates the typical relation between Ovid and Augustus. It is clear that the emperor is for Ovid the only possible saviour. In that respect, Augustus is for the relegated poet what the *iuvenis* is for Tityrus: one short statement can condition the rest of his life (cf. *supra*, 6.1.3). Nonetheless, Ovid’s attitude is much more subtle and far less naïve than that of the simple shepherd.

As often in the exilic poetry, this elegy contains two different kinds of meaning.¹⁰⁷ At a more superficial level, Ovid’s moral advice is entirely harmless. It may even be interpreted as a direct message to the emperor: since his sufferings have made him wise, he will cause no further problems if he is allowed to return. At a deeper level, however, the elegy

¹⁰⁶ Cf. U. Bernhardt (1986), 31: the phrase *crede mihi* is often used by Ovid “um seine Aussage Glaubwürdigkeit zu verleihen”.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. G.D. Williams (1994), 208–209, who connects the two kinds of meaning with two different kinds of readership.

contains different polemical accents. First of all, Ovid's presentation of the facts implicitly calls into question the justice of Augustus' decision. The poet associates with powerful persons ... and falls. In this context, nothing is said about an *error*.¹⁰⁸ The verses 7–8 even suggest that it is primarily the powerful persons that are to blame, since they prefer to harm rather than help. Secondly, as has been argued above, Ovid subtly shows that his position is more correct and high-minded than that of Horace. If that is true, Augustus' decision to relegate Ovid while favouring Horace appears—at best—rather arbitrary. In any case, it is an indirect appeal to change Ovid's miserable fate, and at the same time is one more test case for Augustus' own mildness.¹⁰⁹

6.3.3. In conclusion, the answer to the question whether Ovid recommends in this elegy the Epicurean ideal of an 'unnoticed life' can only be negative. If I may borrow a famous image from a famous philosopher, one could regard Epicurus' maxim *λάθε βιώσας* itself as part of the real world outside and the two passages from Horace's *Epistles* as two *εἰδωλα* which are carried around in a dark cave. In Ovid's elegy, one merely finds the shadows of these *εἰδωλα*. They are too remote from the original to be taken as evidence of a direct and thorough familiarity with Epicureanism. From a philosophical point of view, then, this elegy is not a good source for Epicurean doctrine (just as a copy of a still extant manuscript can add nothing to the reconstruction of a text).

It is fair to say, though, that such a negative conclusion does not do justice to Ovid, who never wished to be a philosopher.¹¹⁰ For the poet at Tomis, there were other, more crucial things at stake. His reference to the ideal of an 'unnoticed life' derives its meaning and importance from a subtle polemic against Horace and indirectly against Augustus himself. This finally entails the question of how serious the insights of the *usibus edoctus amicus* are. Can Aeschylus' *πάθει μάθος* be applied to Ovid after all? How confident can one be about the sincerity of this *μάθος* if even the reality of his *πάθος* has recently been doubted?¹¹¹ Even the perceptive reader in the end remains baffled by the virtuoso

¹⁰⁸ The theme of *fatum*, on the other hand, which excludes human free decisions, is present; see 3.4a, 34 and 37; cf. in general A. Videau-Delibes (1991), 485.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. G. Williams (2002), 367–368.

¹¹⁰ Cf. R. McKim (1984/5).

¹¹¹ See, e.g., A.D. Fitton Brown (1985).

blend of seriousness and humour, of ridiculing others and self-irony. That such bafflement, however, does not spoil, but rather contributes to the pleasure of reading, constitutes the true greatness of the poet Ovid.

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[C. Bailey's monumental commentary (see *infra*) was always πρόχειρον]

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